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MARIE DE RABUTIN CHANTAL

MARQUISE DE SÉVIGNÉ

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ,

HER

CORRESPONDENTS AND CONTEMPORARIES.

BY

THE COMTESSE DE PULIGA.

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ac

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ,

HER

CORRESPONDENTS AND CONTEMPORARIES.

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1661-79.

Death of Mazarin.—Colbert, Prime Minister.—The two queens.—The king's love for Mademoiselle de la Vallière.—His character.—Death of Anne of Austria.—Death of Philip IV of Spain.—War is declared against Spain.—Louis XIV's campaign in Flanders.—Return to St.-Germain.—Conquest of Franche-Comté.—Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.—Preparations to invade the United Provinces.—MADAME goes to England.—Her sudden death.—War with Holland.—Success of the French arms.—Ruyter victorious at sea.—Assassination of De Witt.—The Emperor and Spain come to the aid of the Dutch.—Holland is abandoned.—Battle of Senef.—Death of Turenne.—Condé his successor.—England makes peace with Holland.—Peace of Nimeguen.—Louis XIV at the summit of his grandeur.

MAZARIN died on the 9th of March, 1661. From that instant Louis XIV., realizing his own words—'l'état c'est moi,'—took into his hands the reins of state, and determined to govern and be master. All Europe was watching the first acts of the young

monarch. A great blow had been struck. Fouquet hurled from the height of power to the gloomy dungeon of Pignerol, his enemy and denunciator Colbert took upon himself the heavy task of reforming the finances—in a word, of reforming the state. It was an undertaking well-nigh beyond human strength, but that patient genius of Colbert would be checked by no obstacles. From the first hour he flattered the king by impressing him with the belief that everything was done by his own royal hand; hence the great ascendency of the minister.

Colbert, whatever his faults, was indeed a great man: the reforms he accomplished, the order he established, the resources he called forth, the navy he created, the impulse he gave to every branch of industry, threw over the reign of Louis XIV. a brilliant halo of prosperity and progress, which was to wane when the hand and head that meditated and ordained were no longer there. Colbert, although he executed much, could not succeed in carrying out all those great schemes of justice and redress of wrong-doing which he yearned to bring to pass. There were privileges and oppressions so established, that to demolish them the arm of one man was insufficient; even a host itself might have failed. Time only, that best ally of great men, could sap and uproot the thorns which were choking on all sides the growth of a fresh and verdant

tree which had Civilization for its name. Colbert is the minister; but other influences weighed with the king, and we must carefully notice that no influence is trivial when exercised on one who is all-powerful.

Turning our eyes from the somewhat sour and severe visage of Colbert, let us gaze on those women who composed the more immediate surroundings of the king. Of the queen dowager there is little to say: she survived the cardinal but five years, and during that period her influence was small, though she wished it otherwise. The king, young, and in the first flush of power, listened reluctantly to his mother. As to his queen, Marie-Thérèse, Infanta of Spain, her passionate love for her husband was to make her feel more keenly his neglect, while her personal appearance was not such as to gain for her a mastery over the mind of one so alive as the king to beauty in every shape.

Marie-Thérèse was of diminutive form, stout, and with the projecting mouth and heavy lips of her race. Her complexion was white and dazzling; her eyes blue, and her hair of an agreeable colour; but her cheeks were somewhat pendant, her forehead too high, and her disposition, if gentle, lacked those more attractive qualities which are needful not only to attach the heart of a king, but those of men.

Side by side with the queen stood her sister-in-

law—the wife of MONSIEUR—Henrietta, the fair daughter of England. She had been brought up in France, and seemed at one time likely to be raised to the throne of France; but Louis was blind to her girlish charms, which were not those that command instant admiration. The king refused her, and was united to that other cousin, a very contrast to the English princess. But the day when the daughter of Charles I graced the court under the name of MADAME (we know not why, but that simple appellation always appears to us to belong more to her than to any other princess who bore it before or after), Louis was dazzled, and in truth with reason. The fascination of MADAME was irresistible, her beauty aërial and transparent, her grace that of a nymph. She became the natural protector of art and letters, and her benignant smile seemed to attract all around her. Her husband, MONSIEUR—that puppet, so unworthy of such a wife—could not, and did not win the heart of the young princess. Did the king do so? Better to say 'Yes' at once. In truth, to MADAME he was a sort of demi-god; from infancy she had looked up to him. It was he who could bring back her brothers to the throne of England, those brothers she so dearly and so constantly loved. And so MADAME became the reigning power, the real queen. It was for her that Racine wrote; it was her approbation that Molière sought.

Life seemed brilliant for this cherished princess, the idol of hundreds; but her delicate health, her feeble constitution, would remind her often how perishable all things are. The cruelty—there is no other word for it—of Louis XIV for those who were feeble or ailing is well known; he could not abide any of those precautions which protect the life of woman. In later years the Duchesse de Bourgogne imperilled more than once her life to satisfy his commands in being ever gay and ever on the alert: it was the same with MADAME; but a violent death was awaiting her.

It was in the circle of MADAME that Louis XIV had first seen Mademoiselle de la Vallière. The love she at once inspired in him was however kept a secret, or, if anything was known of it, it was merely a suspicion; appearances were respected. The king had not yet learnt to consider himself above the common laws of men, and the days of the Précieuses were not distant enough not to admit in some cases of the existence only of that platonic attachment which had been once so much in vogue. It was a triumphant moment, that on the day of the great Carrousel in 1662, when a spectacle of nearly unequalled splendour and magnificence was presented to the court of France. The two queens with MADAME were amongst those called upon to admire, and in the arena the king, MONSIEUR, Monsieur le Prince, the Duc d'Enghien, and a host of

the most brilliant cavaliers and the proudest names in France were assembled.

That same year witnessed a bargain which brought shame to one king and glory to the other—Dunkerque and Mardick were sold by Charles II to his brother and cousin, or rather to his lord. Louis XIV, though united by the closest ties to the King of Spain, was secretly exciting the Portuguese against that monarch, and with his money and his generals obtaining victory for them against one who was his father-in-law and his ally.

Louis, who was to become the implacable adversary of the brave and sturdy Dutch who dared him when all bowed to his power, had commenced by being their ally; while England was rendered powerless by the improvidence and baseness of her king. The Emperor of Germany also was exhausted by his struggles against the Turks, and the unfortunate Philip IV was dying in Spain, his succession to be reaped by an infant. Seeing none to oppose him, Louis XIV, in 1665, judged that the opportune moment had arrived to astonish Europe by some great campaign.

Great changes, imperceptible at one time, but potent in their results, had happened during the past three years; the influence of MADAME was on the wane—Mademoiselle de la Vallière never acquired any—Louis XIV obeyed only Louis XIV. In 1664, at Versailles

he had given a fête which lasted seven days, during which he had offered himself to the admiration of his subjects.

The king was not tall in stature, but extremely commanding and dignified in appearance. His education had been entirely neglected, but his natural abilities stood him in good stead. He knew how to listen and how to retain: in truth, his ignorance was part of his audacity. Like a man walking in the dark, he saw no obstacles. Unacquainted with the history of his own country, he ignored absolutely that of his neighbours; he accepted and acted according to the fiction that the King of France was the first monarch in Europe, and in the end he became so. No example of the past, no warning voice reminded him that he that exalteth himself shall be humbled. As the impatient child stamps its foot to grasp in its little hand some unattainable object, never doubting that a word of his mother can bring it within his reach, so Louis XIV in his blind arrogance believed that his word must strike awe far and near. This ignorance was the strength and also the weakness of Louis XIV; it inspired his wildest and most successful schemes; it gave him that unfounded security which ultimately lost him.

At the beginning of the year 1666, Anne of Austria expired after acute suffering, borne patiently and cou-

rageously during two years. At her death Louis, who if he no longer feared, certainly respected his mother, was free of any restraint, and strove no more to subdue or conceal his passions. Anne of Austria, at once dignified and proud, excelled in the queenly art of conferring distinctions with tact and discernment: her daughter-in-law, MADAME, possessed the same gracious gift; but hers was not the first place; and brilliant though it was, she occupied it but a short period. The traditions of the court became entirely changed, and not for the better.

When Philip IV expired, the King of France had assured his widow, and the boy king his brother-in-law, that he was by right and inclination their natural protector. The warmest gratitude was expressed: the Spanish ambassador embraced his knees, and the confidence these false assurances gave to the Queen of Spain enabled Louis XIV to prepare to carry out his treacherous designs. On the 1st of May, 1667, he was still repeating his protestations of good will, and on the 8th of the same month war was declared. The alleged ground of the quarrel was the vindication of the pretended rights of Marie-Thérèse to a part of her father's heritage. Her promised dower had never been paid: nothing but bland words of welcome had been given at Fontarabie. The king therefore, and the casuists he consulted, de-

clared with one voice the renunciation by Marie-Thérèse at the time of her marriage to have become null and void.

All was ready: Colbert had raised the sums demanded; Louvois, the son of Le Tellier, and new minister of war, had brought the troops of Louis XIV into such order and discipline as they never before possessed. Preparations of every kind had been made. Turenne commanded, victory was certain, and the campaign of Flanders began. The king in person went to join his army, accompanied and followed by the fairest ladies of the court, who occupied those gilt and glazed houses which stood then in place of carriages. Nothing but merriment and laughter everywhere.

The success of the arms of Louis XIV was such as might have been expected; the strongholds of Spanish Flanders were surrendered with little resistance. The king was present at the attack, and reaped all the glory of the conquests. In two months Charleroy, Tournay, Douai, and Lille were in the hands of the French; and Louis, leaving Vauban to fortify his newly acquired fortresses, went back to St.-Germain, taking with him the banners that had been captured from the enemy.

The autumn and early winter were spent in rejoicings. Mademoiselle de la Valliére, no longer hiding among the maids of honour of MADAME, was a

duchesse, and her children bearing the name of Bourbon. She had attained a summit she had never dreamt of, but her nature, gentle and retiring, suffered by all this grandeur, the shame of which she keenly felt—suffered at the sorrow she inflicted on the patient and virtuous queen. It was soon, however, to be her turn to weep tears of jealousy, for it was at that triumphant return from Flanders that the fair, stout, joyous, and witty Montespan, caught the eyes of Louis, who a hundred times before had looked upon her with indifference. From that hour the expiation of Louise de la Vallière commenced.

While these intrigues were rife, others of greater import were being prepared. The great Condé had witnessed with an envious heart the victorious march of Turenne; Louvois regarded with fear the ascendency the great captain was gaining over the monarch, and to stop that triumphant career he determined to oppose new conquests to those of Turenne.

Franche-Comté recognized no master; it governed itself, the kings of Spain being its nominal protectors: it enjoyed great privileges, great liberties, and prospered and flourished. The rich province tempted the French king. Condé, governor of Burgundy, knew well what means would best subdue the province. Gold was first tried, and with effect; and once the foundation shaken and the house unroofed,

Louis was made to start from St.-Germain. He appeared, and the house fell to the ground. Besançon, Dôle, all the towns surrender, and three weeks suffice to add such a conquest to France.

Such marvellous daring, crowned with such results, began to alarm Europe: every sovereign began to fear for himself; while Holland, governed by the indomitable De Witt, sought and signed a defensive alliance with England and Sweden. This alliance was respectfully but firmly notified to Louis XIV, and the result was the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, signed May 2, 1668, by which Franche-Comté was yielded, and French Flanders retained, the mediators reaping the honour this breathing pause gave to Europe.

It was indeed but a moment of rest. Louis XIV was not one to brook without revenge any opposition to his plans of aggrandizement. Holland must rue, and rue dearly, her interference, and from that hour war against the Dutch republic is resolved upon. Time, however, was needed: it is employed in preparations and negotiations, during which, living in false confidence, the peaceful and thrifty Dutch think of little more than their great fleet, and their vessels laden with riches from the furthest East.

The propitious hour having come to rob Holland of her allies, the first to be detached was England. MADAME, at twenty-six, is to be the negotiator. A

progress of the king through his new dominions was the pretext which covered her journey to the seaport whence she embarked. Arrived at Calais, it was but natural she should wish to see her brother, and she crossed the water. It was in appearance the most triumphant moment of her life; she was the chosen mediator between two great kings, and perfect trust was reposed in her. She succeeded in her mission having induced Charles to embrace a policy most contrary to his interests; then, having achieved all that was required of her, she came back to meet, instead of reward, a violent death. MONSIEUR had long subjected her to all those sufferings and humiliations a man can inflict on a woman. When she returned she found him infuriated at the exile of his favourite, the Chevalier de Lorraine. MADAME had caused it, and she was to suffer for it. There is a kind of relief to know that when reflecting on so atrocious a crime, MONSIEUR was not a party to the assassination of his young and beautiful wife.

MADAME returned from England to St.-Cloud, and resumed there her habitual life of gaiety. She bathed in the river, she rode with a 'hundred feathers' (as the term then went) on her head; she was surrounded by her court. A few days passed, and she began to ail, and after a few days appeared better. Madame de la Fayette, a dear friend of MADAME'S, was with her

on that last fatal day—Sunday, the 28th of June, 1670. The princess had been resting at ease on the floor, surrounded by a few ladies; the heat was extreme, and she was overcome by sleep. When she woke she demanded a glass of 'chicory water,' which she drank. That instant she was seized with the most agonizing pains, and declared that she felt that the hand of death was upon her.

To read of her agony, as described by a womanly, loving heart, is enough to bring tears into the eyes of the most indifferent. The poor princess, convinced that she was poisoned, begged for an emetic: she implored for it. The doctors pronounced the attack as devoid of danger, and that she needed no such remedy: even the king could not obtain for her what she required. MADEMOISELLE arrived at St.-Cloud, and all the court, but only to witness the last desperate struggle of life with death. The warning that her last moment had come was given to her, and Bossuet was called in to receive her confession. She accused no one. She spoke in English to the ambassador of Charles II, telling him to keep it from her brother that she had been poisoned. The distressing scene lasted half through the night: at three o'clock she expired, 'gentle before death,' as Bossuet expressed it, 'gentle as she was to all.' Her death was felt as a calamity: she was really and sincerely loved, and the

words, 'MADAME is dying,' 'MADAME is dead,' found tearful echoes in many a heart. MONSIEUR feigned no grief; Louis XIV never sorrowed; and so she passed, leaving behind her that charming image of womanhood which, in spite of its faults, generations have since placed in that chosen gallery of the good and great.

When the first burst of indignation and grief at the fatal news had subsided, Charles II kept his word with France, and Holland soon discovered, that turn which way she would, she encountered nothing but enemies. Sweden, Spain, the Emperor, one and all had by some means been made to promise neutrality. De Witt measured the peril and strove to pacify Louis XIV: he offered every reasonable concession, but it was of no avail; one haughty answer, then another, and finally, with no pretext save that Holland was prosperous and Protestant, war was, on the 5th of April, 1672, declared.

Never had such preparations been made to destroy a flourishing commonwealth. Holland, the very home of peace, resembled one large garden; no fortress would stand in the way of the invaders. All the strength of that little republic lay in her ships; but what could her sailors do to repel Louis, Condé, Turenne, Vauban, Louvois, and the hosts of France? One man, little more than a boy, William of Orange, a son of the great Taciturn, was the only general

to oppose the French captains. His troops were few, and unused to war. Defeat was felt to be certain, and in the first hour it came.

On the 12th of June, 1672, the Rhine was crossed: the Duc de Longueville was killed, but that was the only serious loss; no resistance had been offered, and the glory reaped by Condé on that day added no real lustre to his laurels. The great commander was wounded however, and Turenne remained alone to execute the will of his king. Once on the opposite shore of the Rhine, town after town was captured, and on the 30th of June the king entered Utrecht in triumph. The French army quickly spread over the country, marauders coming so far as Naerden, close to Amsterdam. If the Marquis de Rochefort, who had been despatched to seize Amsterdam, had been bolder, it was all over with Holland, but from the very intensity of despair salvation sprang up.

At sea Ruyter had maintained the superiority of the Dutch fleet. On the 7th of June he had encountered the united French and English fleets, and inflicted terrible losses on both. The coast of Holland was secure at least.

Honourable conditions of peace were sought by the Dutch: they were refused. Then the popular fury, always blind in its vengeance, slew De Witt, that great citizen who for twenty-nine years had governed

his beloved country, and William of Orange, ambitious both for power and the glory of his country stood alone to redeem the liberty of the United Provinces. A resolution, heroic in every way, was taken: the fertile fields, the houses and homes of rich and poor, were voluntarily destroyed; the dams were opened, and Amsterdam, surrounded by water, was guarded by the fleet.

Such a spectacle of self-sacrifice stirred the indifference of Europe. In April the king had but one adversary; in July all was changed. Spain was secretly sending soldiers to the United Provinces; the Emperor Leopold was advancing in aid in the person of Montecucculi at the head of 25,000 men; and the Elector of Brandenburg, with an equal number, was prepared to march. It was at this moment that Louis quitted his army; there was nothing left for him to do in a country inundated on all sides. Luxembourg alone remained to continue the strife. Fortune was about to change. It was no longer the easy task of facing an enemy inferior in number and in discipline. The imperial troops in Westphalia occupied Turenne, and in the United Provinces the soldiers finding that out of France their wants were no longer provided for, began to pillage, and for months the province of Utrecht was ransacked. Flourishing towns offering no offence,

were for the mere sake of wanton cruelty burnt and the inhabitants killed; and in the dead of night the flames of Bodegrave and Svammerdam rose to heaven as the smoke of the sacrifice.

At last, in 1673, a conquest which had appeared so secure and triumphant was abandoned in haste. But for all that the war had not ceased. Louis, to compensate for the loss of the United Provinces he believed so assuredly to have become his, a second time seized Franche-Comté. It was a task as quickly accomplished as it had been before, but with more durable results, and in 1674 that province was annexed to become permanently an integral part of France.

Condé and the Prince of Orange met face to face at Senef on the 11th of August, 1674. The result of the battle was uncertain; but the loss of life was great on both sides, Condé having no less than three horses killed under him. The war in the Palatinate was carried on between Turenne and Montecucculi when, on the 27th of July, 1675, a cannon, 'loaded from all eternity,' sent the ball which at once terminated the existence of Turenne.

Condé started in haste from Chantilly, whither he had returned, and after securing an honourable retreat and advantageous winter quarters for the soldiers of Turenne, he left the army never to resume that sword—

'Questa famosa spada
Al cui valore ogni vittoria è certa.'*

The king was again with his troops, and with him five marshals of France. In 1677 Vauban takes Valenciennes and St.-Omer. But during this time Charles II is forced by his parliament into a treaty with Holland, and the two countries united insist in strong terms that Louis shall be a party to a treaty for peace. By the treaty of Nimeguen, concluded on the 5th of February, 1679, Maestricht was given back to Holland; a great part of French Flanders remained to the victorious monarch, and Franche-Comté was definitively acquired.

The peace of Nimeguen closes the second part of the reign of Louis XIV. The king himself, arrived at the age of forty, in the prime of manhood, and at the summit of grandeur, received from his admiring subjects the name of Great.

* That famous sword, whose valour commands victory.

CHAPTER II.

1677.

Grief of Madame de Grignan at leaving her mother.—Cause of their separation.—Anxiety of Madame de Sévigné.—The Baron de Sévigné at Livry with his mother.—Madame de Sévigné goes to Versailles and the Palais Royal.—Affection of Madame de Sévigné for the children of Madame de Grignan.—True character of Madame de Sévigné.—News of the Court.—Death of Madame du Plessis-Guénégaud.—Madame de Grignan improves in health.

MADAME DE GRIGNAN shed tears on leaving her mother. For one usually so reserved, such a mark of affection spoke volumes, and Madame de Sévigné dwells on it with sad delight. Yet mother and daughter had been compelled to separate, so great were the sufferings their mutual affection inflicted on each other. Madame de Sévigné was grieved at the delicate health of her daughter, and her constant and perhaps over-anxious watchfulness inflicted on Madame de Grignan a restraint and weariness which aggravated her sufferings. Monsieur de Grignan and all their friends foresaw that absence alone could improve the state of Madame de Grignan's health, and restore her mother to calm.

Madame de Sévigné, as we know, had, since her severe illness in the early months of 1676, been subject to slight indispositions: these were magnified by Madame de Grignan; and each thus became to the other a source of pain and anxiety. This singular and sad frame of mind of both mother and daughter is referred to at length in the first letters written by Madame de Sévigné after this separation. 'How can I help protesting,' says she, 'when people come and tell me, "You are killing each other; you must separate"? It is indeed a grand remedy, and one well calculated to end all my anxieties, but certainly not in the way they intend. They read my thoughts, and fancied that I was troubled about you; and with what do they expect me to concern myself? I never saw such injustice as that to which I was lately subjected. Not from you, my daughter; on the contrary, I beg you not to think that you have anything to reproach yourself with in regard to me. You have only to correct yourself of that needless anxiety about my health. You did not conceal your affection from me, as you imagine you had done.'

Answering the self-accusation of Madame de Grignan, Madame de Sévigné goes further, and thanks her for her caresses, her gentleness, her tenderness, her complacency.

Madame de Sévigné was extremely anxious about

the effect the fatigues of a long journey might have on a person so delicate as Madame de Grignan. Her confidence in the care her daughter would receive from her husband and from the faithful Montgobert, her *demoiselle*, could alone tranquillize her. She urges them both to be careful of a trust which is her life, and to that beloved daughter she says—'I have followed you constantly on the road, my child; did your heart not see mine on the way?'

It was a painful truth to announce to the loving mother, that the dreaded Provence, even a laborious journey in summer, were improving the health of her daughter. Welcome as such news must have been, there is no doubt some alloy was added to the consolation. To one who really loves, what more joyful conviction than that of being useful to and exercising a beneficent influence on the object of affection? It is that thought which, even in the darkest hour, throws a ray of light into hearts sunk in gloom. To provoke a smile when offering a solace to some dear sufferer, is the blessed recompense, unsurpassed in sweetness, for all the agony of hope deferred. Such would Madame de Sévigné yearn to be able to do for her child; how could she bring herself to conceive that her presence irritated instead of soothed? It was her precious and dear right to watch over her daughter in sickness, and that right was denied her.

Madame de Grignan's disposition is difficult to understand, for it is clear that no sooner did she quit her mother than remorse rose in her heart, and she begged forgiveness for her cold recognition of so much devotedness. It is touching to see how freely Madame de Sévigné takes the blame on herself. Both have been wrong: 'Let us, my child, re-establish our reputation by another journey, when we will be reasonable, that is you, and when we shall not be told, "You are killing each other."'

Madame de Sévigné, deprived of a presence so dear, had with her still the Baron de Sévigné. The gallant young officer, at the siege of Valenciennes, in the preceding month of March, had received a wound in the heel, as if his mother, like that of Achilles, had left but that one vulnerable place in his body. The wound, unlike that of the son of Thetis, was not mortal, but the inconvenience it occasioned was great enough to force Sévigné to quit the army for a time. Madame de Sévigné and her son, while taking care of each other, did not by an exaggerated tenderness inflict suffering on either. Sévigné, in a letter to his sister, contrasts his more rational conduct with hers. 'We take care of each other,' says he, 'reserving to ourselves, however, an honest liberty; no little womanish remedies. "You are very well, my dear mother, I am delighted to see. You slept well last

night. How is your head? no giddiness? God be praised. Go and breathe the fresh air; go to St.-Maur; sup with Madame de Schomberg; take a walk in the Tuileries: you have nothing to prevent you; I give you entire leave. Will you eat some strawberries, or take some tea? Strawberries are better. Adieu, my dear mother; my heel hurts me: you will remain with me, if you please, from twelve till three, and then we can each do as we like." This is, my dear sister, the manner in which reasonable people behave.'

Madame de Sévigné certainly lived with her son in the happiest union; she repeatedly speaks of the pleasure she derives from his conversation. He loved her dearly, and manifested his affection by all the means in his power; yet, as the human heart knows no law, by some strange and unaccountable caprice, Sévigné never could gain any other than the second place in his mother's affection. Such as it was, it was one to be envied by many sons, but the fact of another being preferred could not be forgotten.

While Madame de Grignan was travelling homeward, Madame de Sévigné was resuming the usual course of her pleasures and duties. Going to Versailles, she sees Madame de Montespan 'in her glory,' reigning as a queen, and cruelly mocking the hand-

some Madame de Ludres, who had been so daring as to please the king. The homage of an hour was dearly expiated, and the pitiless and triumphant Montespan spared no humiliation to one who had aspired to be her rival. 'That rag,' was the contemptuous designation she threw on one who had thwarted her power. Madame de Sévigné visits the Palais Royal, where she is kindly received by MADAME—the new Madame, a rough and honest German, who had taken the place of the fair Stuart. Alas! mourning for such as her is soon forgotten, and Madame de Monaco, who had been the favourite of one MADAME, occupies the same position with the other.

'I looked at that room,' said Madame de Sévigné, 'and at those places of distinction formerly so well filled.' She remembered, we may be sure, that Madame de la Fayette had occupied one of the first positions in that second court which was but a reflection of the other. Madame de la Fayette at that moment was suffering from an acute indisposition, which caused much anxiety to her friends, and to none more so than to Madame de Sévigné.

On arriving at Grignan, the ailing comtesse had been met by her young children, whom she had not seen since the preceding winter, when she found her second little son in such a deplorable condition that

his existence seemed but a matter of days. As it was, at the end of June the little sufferer expired, and Madame de Sévigné, who had never counted on his life, strives to turn her daughter's thoughts to the remaining son—the eldest, the heir. She is concerned at the child's timidity, and she warns her daughter not to treat him roughly. 'Lead him gently,' she says, 'as you would a horse whose mouth is delicate. Remember what I have told you about his timidity; the advice comes from those wiser than me.'

The kind grandmother was never weary of watching from afar the children of her daughter. Madame de Grignan contemplated another journey to Paris, and Madame de Sévigné would have wished her to bring the young marquis and Pauline. For the latter in particular she feared the convent, believing, with truth, that once there an early *vocation* would probably be discovered in her. The intention of the Grignans was to intrust Pauline to her aunt, the Abbess of Aubenas. 'I do not approve,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'of your leaving Pauline with madame your sister-in-law: convents of that kind always displease me. You are good and wise. Do not forget, I pray, what I tell you of the timidity of your son. If he is robust, a rough education is excellent; but if he is delicate, I remember hearing Brayer and Bour-

delot* say, that in striving to make a constitution more robust, you destroy it.'

Madame de Sévigné certainly rescued Pauline from a convent: it was her repeated assurances that 'her wit would be her dower,' which induced Madame de Grignan to support the burden of a second child. But the little marquis owed even a greater obligation to his grandmother. He became brave and bold, and perhaps if in childhood he had not been guarded from rough treatment by her tender interference, his disposition might not have grown to be what it became. Never was a woman more completely the good and guarding influence of a family than Madame de Sévigné; in every circumstance, be it great or small, whether it concerns the weal of a whole province or the happiness of two little beloved beings, she points out quietly but clearly the right path. She it was who has said that 'there are souls as straight as lines, and which love virtue as naturally as horses trot.' Hers was indeed one. It strikes us that all those good words are as much in praise of Madame de Sévigné as her pure and honourable life.

To return to Grignan, an absence of eight months had naturally awakened in Madame de Grignan's mind a fresh interest in her children: the son she had lost rendered still more precious the only remaining one;

* Celebrated doctors of that time.

and at first Pauline, being pretty and full of happy promise, also awakened affection in that cold breast. In Madame de Grignan's correspondence (alas! why did her daughter Pauline destroy it?) at that period the children evidently occupied a prominent place; for Madame de Sévigné's frequent mention of them is clearly in answer to her daughter. Madame de Sévigné, who had educated so carefully her own children, saw early the necessity of a preceptor for the little marquis. 'It is a pity,' says she, 'to allow his little mind to remain uncultivated.' And there again, fearful of the exaggerated severities and principles of Madame de Grignan, she adds—'Before treating children as ploughboys, we must ascertain whether they be ploughboys.'

The endeavours of Madame de Sévigné to persuade her daughter to love her children are at once sad and touching: one would imagine she was suggesting to her some feeling requiring an effort of reason to yield to. It is she, at so great a distance, who pleads the cause of those innocent ones, whose claims were not sufficient to warm a mother's heart so swallowed up by worldly vanity, coldness, and philosophy.

'Love Pauline, love her; give yourself that pleasure: do not torture your heart in separating yourself from that child. What do you fear? It will be time enough to put her in a convent some years hence,

should you judge it necessary. Try, try a little maternal love; when it is a choice of the heart it has a pleasant flavour.' And again—'Why do you constrain yourself? what do you fear? Leave a little liberty to your heart on that point; I am certain you will derive extreme satisfaction from it.'

All these urgent solicitations seem to have been of little avail, and at last Madame de Sévigné appeals to Monsieur de Grignan. It is to him she recommends Pauline:—'I beg him to defend her against your philosophy: do not rob yourselves of that innocent amusement. Alas! we have not too many pleasures to choose from, and when we find under our hands some that are blameless and natural, it appears to me a useless cruelty to deprive ourselves of them.'

We have dwelt at some length on this part of Madame de Sévigné's correspondence in our desire to give a correct estimate, not only of the great writer, but of the woman. It is she who speaks in all those lines, who discloses the refinements of a heart replete with every gentle feeling. It is easy to form a false notion of a character. It is an easy task to put together all the more apparent features, and from them to form an image presenting a resemblance to the original, true in its parts, but incomplete in the whole. This we believe has frequently been done, and for no one more than Madame de Sévigné. A rapid perusal of

her correspondence is followed by a hasty appreciation: a few phrases, some good, others bad, are remembered, and little by little grows the popular representation (in nearly every case the familiar idea of the person is an erroneous one) of some woman of genius resembling Madame de Sévigné, but not herself. If we become intimately acquainted with some one arrived at old age, the features so familiar to us have still some unknown expression which we never beheld, but which to the friends of that person's youth remains present as it once existed. Because we know it not, we shall not say it was never there, nor would any artist attempt to paint a portrait of the youth of a man he never saw but in old age. Yet this is being done every day in moral portraits of all those whom some cause rescues from oblivion. The sage has said, 'Praise not a man till he be dead;' and it would be but justice to those who are dead, not to follow them only in the broad highway of glaring actions and words, but into those silent corners of the heart, into those hours of unrestrained intercourse, when all that was secret is revealed. How few, it is true, can court such an inquiry! and how many of those gods with heads of gold and feet of brass would be standing on their pedestals if it were done? But, where the great woman who now occupies us is concerned, a constant reference to her letters discloses ever some

new beauty of thought, language, or eloquence; so also the study of her sentiments, of the motives of all her actions, demonstrates her to have been indeed 'sound in the noble parts.'

We have said that Madame de Sévigné had resumed her usual course of worldly amusements; she, however, left Paris in the middle of July to go to Livry, where she found 'a peace, a silence, a leisure,' which enchanted her. When, however, she was joined in her solitude by her son, his presence certainly added to the attractions of the place. 'The baron is here,' says his mother, 'and though suffering from his heel, does not allow me to put foot to the ground, so rapidly does he guide me through the books we have determined to read together.' Those books were Don Quixote, Lucian, and Les Petites Lettres.

The manner in which Sévigné acquitted himself in reading the masterpieces of Pascal excited the admiration of Madame de Sévigné: she said that after they have passed through his hands they acquire some peculiar charm. The talent of the young baron for reading had a close connection with his love of bygone days, when La Champmeslé had inflamed his heart; but such reminiscences, if they occurred, drew but a smile from both. The pleasure Madame de Sévigné found in the society of her son was clouded, however, by the difficult position in which he was placed,

and it was no easy task to maintain in those 'born for nothing but talking' the belief in the seriousness of a wound which, leaving him in perfect health, quite incapacitated him for active service. On this subject Madame de Sévigné exclaims—'I find the reputation of men much more fragile and delicate even than that of women.' However, Sévigné, though still incapable of riding, started for the army; but before he joined his regiment, the siege of Charleroy, to which he was hastening, had been raised.

If Madame de Sévigné pressed her daughter to forget every other care but that of her health, she was entreated with an equal warmth to bestow more attention on her own, and to please Madame de Grignan, and comply with the advice given her, she looked forward to another journey to Vichy. Frequent disappointments had, however, rendered Madame de Sévigné cautious whether to rejoice at or fear forthcoming events. The day for leaving Paris being settled, the marquise wrote to her daughter—'I shall go assuredly, and the day being fixed, nothing but a misfortune could change it. I hope for once that Providence will not thwart me. I am so accustomed to be disappointed in most of my desires, that I never speak of the future without hesitation. The style of the Pyrrhonians pleases me, and their uncertainty appears to me very prudent; at least it prevents their being laughed at.

"Do you go to Vichy?" "Perhaps." This is the way we ought to talk.'

Cheerful and bright is the outward aspect, pleasant the smile, but there is always in the inner heart a certain sadness. We are not going to pretend that Madame de Sévigné's good spirits hid an inward melancholy. No, certainly. 'Joy,' as Madame de la Fayette said, 'was the natural state of her soul.' None welcomed happiness and tranquillity with a keener appreciation of those good gifts. But every succeeding year, bringing with it its share of trouble and disappointment, had more and more turned her thoughts into a serious channel. There existed in her life certain facts over which she had no control, and which made her say—'Without a little philosophy or devotion we should hang ourselves.' What is more conventional than remarks which represent a person as being always the same? Because Madame de Sévigné jokes readily, because she is alive to everything that is ridiculous, is the sincerity of those passing expressions of melancholy to be questioned? Is not rain often immediately followed by sunshine? And are we bound to act through life the lover, the traitor, the coquette? Beings who are always gloomy or always laughing are seldom, we imagine, to be met with in real life. The reproach of inconsistency is one of those meaningless accusations which harm,

though they prove little. Perpetual day or perpetual sunshine would weary us as much as eternal darkness. The charm of spring consists in its being the image of an uncertain future; it is new, it is fresh, and it delights us. Inconsistency signifies nothing: to-day it is called by that name, and to-morrow we term it the changing aspects of human nature, or the different sides of a varied talent.

Madame de Sévigné in her letters, never sparing the most rapid transition, leaves the subject nearest her heart, and the mention of which interests her most, to talk of the pleasures of Fontainebleau. The taste, the passion of Louis XIV for his different country residences is well known. Sometimes there is weariness of Versailles, and then for a change the court moves to Fontainebleau or Marly. Wherever it may be, pleasure and magnificence follow. Madame de Montespan, who was then in the decline of her favour, entered into all those plans of amusement with renewed interest. By every means she strives to affirm that she is sure of the king's heart; but too many curious eyes were on them not to trace, even through the apparent warmth, the fatigue of the royal lover.

'Fontainebleau appears to me,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'a perilous test. Old loves, like old people, must not be made to change places.'

Many little bits of news from court did Madame de Sévigné hear from Madame de Coulanges, who remained a favourite in that inconstant world. At Livry, during those visits she paid from time to time to her cousin, there was leisure to comment upon and criticise all those *belles* who were regarded with envy, and who in truth were so little to be envied.

A few days before leaving Paris, Madame de Sévigné had to inform her daughter of the death of Madame du Plessis-Guénégurd. This faithful friend of Fouquet, who had found herself involved in his disgrace, had died nearly forgotten. 'This news [the death of Madame du Plessis] surprised and affected me,' writes Madame de Sévigné. 'It reminded me of so many things, that I cried from my heart. I was her friend only by reflection, as you know; but we were naturally inclined to each other.' She alludes then to the causes supposed to have hastened the death of Madame du Plessis, and adds—'But we who read Providence, believe that her hour had been fixed from all eternity. All those little events were linked together and followed one after another only to arrive at that end. Such reflections do not console those who mourn for her, but amongst these there are many equivocal sorrowers. "It had become impossible to please her; misfortune had soured her temper." You understand to what I allude. I have dwelt at length

on this death, because I fancied you were listening to me with attention.' In a letter written a few days later, Madame de Sévigné, still occupied by the sad fate of a woman who had known such prosperity and such adversity, goes on to say—'I have meditated on this death. This woman had acted a great part: she had made the fortune of many, dispensed pleasures to others; she had taken a share in great affairs, and had possessed the confidence of two ministers, whose preference she honoured. She had a fine intellect, great views, knew how nobly to dispense a large fortune, but she knew not how to bear the loss of it. Misfortune had soured her disposition; her reverses irritated her; this was shown in everything, and served perhaps as a pretext for the coldness of her friends. She proved herself in this the exact opposite of Foucquet, who was made giddy by his prosperity, and who bore his disgrace heroically: that contrast always struck me.'

The recollection of Madame du Plessis brought back to Madame de Sévigné's mind, not only the days of anxious expectation when Fouquet was being tried for his life, but those happy visits to Fresnes, when she had been accompanied by the 'prettiest girl in France.' Madame de Sévigné remarks that she makes an anniversary of everything; her imagination prompted her to evoke the past, and bring back

to her heart the emotions of bygone hours. It was a sincere and truthful picture she made of the career of Madame du Plessis, but if all the hosts of Fresnes, if all the friends of Fouquet had remembered bygone days with an equal freshness of impression, the poor woman who went to her grave forgotten would have been regretted.

While Madame de Sévigné was preparing to start for Burgundy on her way to Vichy, Madame de Grignan, established in her château and surrounded by a part of her family, was gradually recovering her health. The Bel Abbé, her brother-in-law, and La Garde, cousin of the Grignans, had bid good-bye to Madame de Sévigné a few weeks before, when on the point of starting for Provence. Monsieur de Grignan had fulfilled his promise, and his wife, who certainly was extremely attached to him, praised him and his affection in her letters to her mother. Madame de Sévigné, who appreciated her son-in-law, and wished above all things her daughter's happiness, answers her—'There is assuredly one whose affection, as you say, pretends to go side by side with mine. In truth, I see no difference; and what will surprise you is, that I am not jealous of it; on the contrary, it causes me great joy, and I have a thousand times more friendship and affection for him.'

Such words must have cost Madame de Sévigné

some effort, but her absorbing love for her daughter did not demand an equal requital. She acknowledged the just claims of Monsieur de Grignan, though she owned that 'that detested Provence' made her say of her life, 'let it pass, and as quick as it can.'

CHAPTER III.

1677-9.

Madame de Sévigné leaves Paris for Burgundy.—Stays with the Comte de Guitaut at Epoisses.—Visits Bussy at Chaseu.—Arrival at Vichy.—Journey back to Paris.—She makes a call at Langlar, the house of the Abbé Bayard.—Visits the ironworks at Cosne.—Death of the Abbé Bayard.—Regret of Madame de Sévigné.—Her arrival in Paris.—She occupies the Hôtel de Carnavalet.—Description of the house.—Madame de Grignan arrives in Paris.—Bussy's advice to Madame de Grignan.—Judgment of Bussy and Madame de Sévigné on the 'Princesse de Clèves.'—Differences of Madame de Sévigné and her daughter.—Letters of Madame de Sévigné to Bussy.—Preparations for Madame de Grignan's departure.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ at the end of July had written to Bussy to inform him of her contemplated visit to Burgundy. She did not intend to go to her own mansion of Bourbilly, it not being in fitting order to receive her; but to Epoisses, the house of her friend the Comte de Guitaut. He and Bussy had long been strangers to each other, both refusing to take the first step towards a reconciliation. It was a difficult position for Madame de Sévigné, so she warned her cousin

that he might, in order to see her, make such arrangements as best suited his convenience. It ended in Madame de Sévigné visiting him at Chaseu.

On the 16th of August, the day originally fixed by the marquise, she left Paris with her 'Bon Abbé.' His company was not that most suited to her tastes, but she was making him a greater sacrifice when for his sake, and in deference to his wishes, she renounced the hope of going from Vichy to Grignan. She left Paris in rather low spirits, notwithstanding La Feuille—Madame de Coulanges—had devoted herself for several days preceding her departure to loading her as usual with every proof of affection.

This time as she journeyed to Vichy, Madame de Sévigné followed, not the traces of Madame de Montespan, but those of her own daughter. It was but two months since Madame de Grignan stopped at those inns where Madame de Sévigné now alighted. In every place she asked news of the traveller who had preceded her. One good woman tells her that Madame de Grignan was pale and thin, and that Monsieur de Grignan pressed her to eat. This hostess entered into all the feelings of our marquise, telling her with tears that she also had a child established far from her; and when Madame de Sévigné inquires where, she is answered in Paris—the mother residing at Villeneuve St.-Georges. The comparison was rather startling, but the

amiable woman adds—'I entered into her sorrow as she had entered into mine.'

On the road, everywhere, as she pleasantly expresses it, she finds her daughter 'thin,' and is happy that the news she thus collects on her way has been followed by more satisfactory accounts of her. The journey, however, was accomplished better than Madame de Sévigné had hoped; the good abbé, to redeem his unwillingness to go to Grignan, surpassing himself in attention, care, and affection. The weather was fine, the country beautiful, the books selected interesting; and so, without weariness, Madame de Sévigné reached Epoisses on the 21st of August, 1677. The mistress of the house was not there to welcome her; she was detained in Paris, and it is Guitaut and his mother who received the marquise; this they did with true pleasure. Madame de Sévigné was charmed with the master of the house, with his conversation, and with the liberty she enjoyed. She could go to Bourbilly and settle her affairs, and then return to Epoisses and talk of her daughter. The little worries and disappointments of business did not affect her; she accepted the losses inflicted on her by negligence in saying—'When it is not my fault, and there is no remedy, I console myself immediately.'

After remaining ten days at Epoisses, Madame de Sévigné, thoroughly pleased with her visit, started,

accompanied by the Comte de Guitaut, who wished to go a part of the way with her. At Saulieu, where he left Madame de Sévigné, a letter was written to Madame de Grignan; half of it by the marquise and half by her host; each in turn taking the pen and continuing the joke of the other. In reading it we understand Madame de Sévigné saying to Guitaut, who was entering on the practice of a very rigid devotion—'My dear sir, it is early to go to bed. You are still very green; there is yet a great deal of the old man, or rather the young man, in you;' and in truth one would think so from the letter.

Madame de Sévigné upon leaving Epoisses went to Chaseu. Bussy came to meet her on the road with his daughter, Madame de Coligny, and Monsieur de Toulongeon; the party entering the coach of Madame de Sévigné. She had a new coachman of whom she was extremely proud: he had two great qualities, according to the Comte de Guitaut; the first, that he was an excellent coachman; the second, that he paid no attention to the screams of the marquise. The first talent, however, was soon found at fault, and the whole party were awkwardly upset. There was a little fright, but no harm done, for when Madame de Sévigné had inquired after her uncle, she resumed the conversation—which was about 'Don Quixote'—with Bussy and his daughter. Once together at Chaseu, the intercourse never flagged,

and fanning the flame of each other's wit they talked as they had so often done in the days of their youth.

On the 3rd of September, Madame de Sévigné reached Vichy. Her first satisfaction in arriving there was the reception of Madame de Grignan's letters, for her rapid movements had prevented her from receiving regularly her correspondence.

Vichy itself was gay and animated; never had so many people been seen there. The month of September began like July, and the presence of one or two men of fashion inspired all the women with the arts of coquetry. 'I wish you could see to what height the presence of Termes and Flamarens causes the head-dress of two or three belles of this place to rise, and how it improves their toilet,' says Madame de Sévigné. 'In fact, from six in the morning they are curled, powdered, . . . rouged, and patched, with fans, long and tight bodices; it is enough to make one die of laughter.'

The marquise, satisfied and amused as she was at Vichy, was however anxious to return to Paris, in order to seek a new house. Her great desire was that Madame de Grignan while in Paris might be able to lodge with her; and she said with truth that when under the same roof there are hours to be enjoyed which otherwise can never be found. D'Hacqueville, the ever-obliging friend, was intrusted by Madame de Sévigné with a commission to hire the Hôtel de Carna-

valet, which she had a great desire to secure. At the same time she was afraid that some new caprice of her daughter would make her wish to have a separate house. In regard to this Madame de Sévigné received every satisfaction; Madame de Grignan answering her, that if there was no place for her in her mother's house, she was determined to take the room of someone else, and lodge with her whether she wished it or not. 'Come, come, my dearest,' answered the fond mother; 'this is a style better suited to the affection I bear you than that of one of your former letters. Fear not that your confidence is misplaced.'

Madame de Sévigné, who often remarked that to be happy she must have near her one of the name of Grignan, was satisfied on that score at Vichy. The chevalier, the brother of her son-in-law, who was there drinking the waters, was, and became evermore, a dear and valued friend of the marquise. His good sense made her often appeal to him in her little differences with her daughter. She also liked his great valour and his just ambition, calling him 'Le petit Glorieux.' All the Grignans were celebrated for their haughty mien, but he was the proudest of them all. It was no fault in Madame de Sévigné's eyes; on the contrary, she saw in it the best incentive to success, and she would have wished for her son some of that thirst for renown which, if the Chevalier de Grignan's health

had not very early disabled him for active service, would have made his fortune.

The easy life of Vichy, strikingly similar to the existence at our watering-places at the present time, excepting that there was there 'confusion without confusion,' pleased Madame de Sévigné; but after sixteen days her thoughts unwillingly, owing to the proximity of Vichy to Grignan, were directed to her return to Paris. From Vichy, however, she first went to Langlar, the house of the Abbé Bayard, to whom she had paid a visit the preceding year. She was accompanied by Termes, Flamarens, and the Chevalier de Grignan. They remained at Langlar a few hours, and then proceeded on her journey. At Moulins her 'good company,' as she called it, could not find sufficient courage to leave her, but determined to take her a little further on the road. They stopped together at Cosne, to visit some ironworks. 'We went yesterday,' says the marquise, 'into a perfect hell. It is the forges of Vulcan. We saw there eight or ten Cyclops forging, not the arms of Æneas, but anchors for ships. You never saw blows dealt with such certainty and in such admirable cadence. We were in the midst of four furnaces, and from time to time those demons came round us melted with heat, with pale faces, savage looks, uncultivated beards, and hair long and black; such a sight might frighten even less civilized people than us.'

At Gien Madame de Sévigné left her friends and proceeded to Paris with her uncle. She hoped there to see the Abbé Bayard, and thank him for the hospitality she had received at his house during his absence; but two days after quitting Langlar, the news of the abbé's sudden death reached her. To a mind like Madame de Sévigné's, keenly alive to all the terrors of that fearful passage from life to death, this unexpected demise of a friend, the very day she was enjoying his hospitality and talking of him with gratitude, came home strongly to her imagination. 'I own,' writes she, 'that the cry I uttered came from my heart. I had a real desire to see him, to tell him of the pleasant life we had led at Langlar, and our regret at missing his presence, as the best thing in his house, and the first line I read tells me of his death; and what a death! He had spent the preceding day with Madame de Coulanges and Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld; he had talked of me, and of the pleasure he had in thinking I was at Langlar. On the Sunday he takes some soup, and was sick. In the afternoon he is thirsty, and asks for drink. His valet leaves him to obey his order, and on his return finds him dead! What a surprise! what suddenness! One is often a very good man without being a very good Christian: no confession, no preparation; we are plunged into an abyss of meditation when we think of it.'

Notwithstanding we have dwelt on the subject before, it is curious here to note the intensity of such reflections in Madame de Sévigné, and how her mind turned to the problems of that life which follows death. Repulsive as it was to her, that inevitable doom which awaits us all, it is impossible for her to announce the death of any one connected with her by the ties of friendship without allowing her thoughts to wander to these serious meditations, which we feel convinced were constantly present to her.

The warm welcome Madame de Sévigné's friends were ready with on her return to Paris, helped to dissipate the gloom the sad event of the Abbé Bayard's death had thrown over her mind. On alighting from her carriage Madame de Sévigné was met by D'Hacqueville, eager to inform her that the Hôtel de Carnavalet was secured, and at the same time the Coulanges offered her the hospitality of their house till her own could be prepared to receive her. Monsieur de Coulanges himself thus announces to Madame de Grignan the arrival of her mother :—

'We have her back at last, that incomparable "beauty-mother," more incomparable and more a beauty than ever. Do you imagine that she arrived tired ? Do you think she kept her bed ? No such thing. She did me the honour to alight at my house, looking handsomer, younger, and more bril-

liant than ever. Her continual fatigues since her return have left her in perfect bodily health. As to her mind, it is with us to talk only of that rare comtesse in Provence. What have we not said of her as yet? And what more shall we not say? What a book could be made out of her perfections! And how voluminous would be the index!'

Whilst Madame de Sévigné was occupying the house of Madame de Coulanges, the latter was at Livry. In the midst of her occupations, preparing and arranging her new house, the marquise goes to see her there, but soon she returns to town, anxious to survey her new establishment and prepare to welcome Madame de Grignan.

The Hôtel de Carnavalet, situated in the Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine (now Rue de Sévigné), had formerly belonged to the family whose name it bore, but just before Madame de Sévigné went there to live it had been inhabited by Madame de Lillebonne, daughter of the Duc de Lorraine. The house, still standing in perfect preservation, was built under François I, and beautifully decorated interiorly and exteriorly with sculpture by Jean Goujon. Madame de Sévigné was delighted with it, and says to her daughter—'It is an admirable affair: there is room for us all, and we shall have a healthy situation. As it is impossible to find everything, we must be satisfied without the

inlaid wooden floors, and the small mantelpieces now in fashion. But we shall at least have a fine courtyard, a large garden, and be in the best part of the city.'

All this is still to be seen. The house forms a quadrangle. Entering through the porte-cochère we find a large courtyard, enclosed by buildings. The height of the principal part of the house, that commanding a view of the garden, is but of two floors. Between the high windows are sculptured, on the outside, some graceful figures. The architecture is plain and harmonious. The entrance is on the left-hand side of the courtyard, and the stairs, though not broad, are handsome: they lead to the rooms supposed to have been inhabited by the marquise.

The apartments of the Hôtel de Carnavalet are handsome and spacious, and bear the mark of the century in which they were built. The chimneys are monumental; the ceilings show the rafters, some of which retain traces of painting and ornamentation. The floors are of stone. One little room—a 'cabinet'—is marked out as that occupied by Madame de Sévigné. It is square, and has two large windows. The left wing of the house has on its roof a large and broad terrace, where no doubt the marquise frequently enjoyed the fresh air. The garden is now a waste, but when it was tended and cultivated, it

added its share of beauty to this charming and noble habitation.

In speaking of their future arrangements in their new house, Madame de Sévigné mentions that she with her daughter must take the upper floor, leaving the ground floor for Monsieur de Grignan and his daughters. Mesdemoiselles de Grignan, still at a convent in Paris, were to leave it on the arrival of their father.

The one absorbing thought of Madame de Sévigné in entering her new house was to suit it to Madame de Grignan's taste. 'I am going to wait for you in Carnavalet,' she says, 'where I imagine it will be in my power to render you a thousand little services not bigger than a trifle. This makes me happy, for if I remember rightly you wrote to me a few days ago that it is in trifles we can best prove friendship. It is true, my daughter, they cannot be too much esteemed. On great occasions, pride has too large a share; the interest of affection is lost in that of vanity. This is a way of thinking I do not wish you to alter, as for the present it suits my interests.'

Madame de Sévigné, with all her occupations, did not neglect going to St.-Maur to see Madame de la Fayette. The health of this dear friend was always such as to cause a certain degree of anxiety.

The sight of Madame de la Fayette brought forcibly

to Madame de Sévigné's mind the very delicate health of her own daughter, whom she imagined, if she did not promptly recover, would in time also become a confirmed invalid.

When Madame de Grignan arrived in Paris in the middle of November, 1677, her appearance confirmed all the worst fears of her mother, who perceived that those assurances of good health which she had been receiving were but a flattering delusion; and the joy of embracing her daughter was again, at the very outset, clouded by keen sorrow. Madame de Sévigné thus expresses what she felt in a letter to Bussy:—

'The Belle Madelonne is here; but as there is no pure joy in this world, the pleasure I have in seeing her is clouded by the grief which her bad health causes me. Imagine, my poor cousin, that the pretty little person you found so much to your taste, has now become so thin and so delicate that she is in truth quite another person. Her health is so affected that I cannot think of it without the deepest anxiety. This is what God reserved for me in giving me back my daughter.'

The visit of Madame de Sévigné to Chaseu had warmed her affection for Bussy, and immediately on her return to Paris she had written to him a letter expressing it. To please the marquise it was sufficient to speak highly of Madame de Grignan, and to

gratify Bussy it was only necessary to sing the praises of Madame de Coligny. Both cousins gave to each other that satisfaction, and Madame de Sévigné is loud in her eulogies of the 'happy widow.' It is evident that when writing to Bussy, Madame de Sévigné knew full well that nothing was lost,—and although we prefer her greater freedom when writing to her daughter, there is much to admire in her letters to her cousin.

From Livry, where Madame de Sévigné went for a few days in the beginning of November, she sends to Bussy a short description of the autumnal appearance of the trees in her garden:—'I have come here to see the end of the fine weather, and bid adieu to the leaves. They are still on the trees, and have but changed colour. Instead of being green, they are golden, and of so many varied tints that they form a brocade so gorgeous and magnificent, that we are inclined to prefer it to green, were it but for a change.' The answer of Bussy is marked by his usual ingenuity:—'I approve your taste, madame, in preferring the different tints of autumn to the green of spring; but I trace some self-pride in that judgment. It is adroitly saying you have more merit than young people; and, by my faith, you are right, for youth is but "green," while we, folks of a later season, are a thousand colours, each better than the

other.' This rather vain appreciation of his own value has, by a rare fortune, been confirmed to Bussy by posterity; and on Madame de Sévigné a verdict has been pronounced which more than justifies all the admiration her cousin felt for her merits.

In regard to Madame de Grignan's health he proffers the counsel of a philosopher, to pass for which was his ambition. It would have been well for the Belle Madelonne, and also for her mother, if they had been able to act upon such judicious instructions. 'A mere scratch,' says Bussy, 'with an anxious mind, harms more than fever with a contented one. I speak thus to you, my dear cousin, because I am persuaded that all the ailments of the "Belle Madelonne" come from her imagination. She is young, and it makes me rest assured that her mind only renders her incurable. Her obstinacy is the proof of it, for if she wished to amend she would listen to the advice of those who are wise on such subjects. Let her turn to God with a good heart, and ask Him to grant her patience. Let her wish to live, and live gaily. I advise nothing which I have not myself practised for twelve years. Nobody is more sensitive than I am; no one hates injustice more than I do; and no one has suffered greater than I have. So long as I rebelled against persecution, I suffered damnation, and my impatience so increased my suffering, that I

should have died in the Bastille if one month before leaving it I had not resolved to submit to anything it might please God to do with me. This resignation gave me spirit, and saved me from the operation to which the physicians had condemned me. Since then, madame, you cannot doubt, that having found such good results from patience and cheerfulness, I have frequently employed those remedies; they have so disposed me, that having lost the profit of thirty years' service, the return of good fortune is indifferent to me; and I have never even enjoyed life so much as since my disgrace. This is my secret, my dear cousin, which, I send to the "Belle Provençale." I do not think that the difference of our disposition would prevent it being useful to her. It appears to me it can be of service to every one.'

Bussy's admirable advice, if not strictly truthful as regarded himself, seems not to have been very profitable to the person for whom it was intended.

Monsieur de Grignan joined his wife in Paris in the month of February, 1678; but the duties of his post compelled him to retrace his steps almost immediately—Madame de Grignan remaining with her mother.

In the following month, Madame de Sévigné, in a letter to Bussy, mentions the publication of the 'Princesse de Clèves,' the chef-d'œuvre of the Com-

tesse de la Fayette. 'It is,' says she, 'one of the most charming stories I have ever read;' and she asks Bussy to give her his opinion on the subject. He expresses it thus:—'I had forgotten to tell you, madame, that at last I have read the "Princesse de Clèves," and have done so with perfect impartiality, not in the least prejudiced by the good or bad that has been said of it. I found the first part admirable; the second not so good. In the first volume, except some words too often repeated, and those few in number, everything is agreeable, everything is natural, nothing tires. In the second, the avowal which the Princesse de Clèves makes to her husband is extravagant, and could only be related in a true history; but when it is invented it is ridiculous to give to the heroine such an extraordinary sentiment. The author in doing so has thought more of avoiding a resemblance to other novels than of good sense. A woman rarely tells her husband that some one is in love with her, and never that she experiences love for another than himself; still less would she in so doing throw herself on her knees, as the princesse does, as that would lead her husband to believe that she has put no bounds to the outrage she has done him.'

To render intelligible these remarks of Bussy, a few words of explanation in regard to the 'Princesse de Clèves' are necessary. The scene of the story is laid

in the time of Henri II, and in it Catherine de Médicis and Marie Stuart—la Reine Dauphine—play an active part. It is an agreeable and harmonious blending, if we may so express it, of truth and fiction. The hero, the Duc de Nemours, is a paragon; handsome and brave, and equally esteemed by men and beloved by women. The object of his adoration is the Princesse de Clèves, a young beauty recently united to a husband charming and amiable, but for whom she cannot bring herself to feel the same passionate tenderness he experiences for her. In a word, she loves Nemours, and is loved in return. But, attached to her duties, sensible of the merits of her husband, grateful for his affection, the princesse resolves to tear from her heart an inclination her virtuous conscience reprobates. The scenes of love—love spoken in looks and trifles before a hundred eyes—the efforts to fly from Monsieur de Nemours, are described with a grace and force that cannot be surpassed. The culminating scene, to which Bussy alludes as improbable, is this: Madame de Clèves, during an absence of her husband, is alone at Coulommiers, her country residence. Monsieur de Nemours, unseen by her, and his presence unsuspected, watches her movements when, on summer evenings, accompanied by her women, she repairs to a solitary pavilion. But Monsieur de Clèves has been warned of the presence of a man seen at dusk near his

house. He appears upon the scene, and accuses his wife of infidelity. It is at that moment she makes him the touching confession of the involuntary feelings of her heart, begging him to guard her against herself. Monsieur de Nemours, who is at his usual post of observation, overhears the conversation, and receives thus the first assurances that his love is returned. To be brief, when Monsieur de Clèves dies, mortally wounded by the conviction of his wife's indifference, his widow, conscious of her share in his untimely fate, regards herself as a culprit, and determines now more than ever to shun Monsieur de Nemours. She does so, though her love is only more violent, and when in a position to think of forming a second union, she resists all her lover's entreaties, and repairs to a solitary mansion in the south of France, where she dies of love and regret.

Such very exalted sentiments could not suit Bussy's disposition. Some of his criticisms are just, and he is right when, in some lines we have not quoted, he blames the author for having employed the hackneyed form of soliloquy. He says, with great truth, that the most ridiculous thing is to represent people talking aloud, a thing which is never really done. But quarrels on such minor faults do not, and could not, rob the 'Princesse de Clèves' of the intrinsic worth it possessed, and though Madame de Sévigné seems, in a

few words in which she explains nothing, to submit her views to her cousin's, yet we believe she continued to feel, and to feel rightly, that the work of her friend was one of the 'most charming stories she ever read.' Now that two centuries nearly have elapsed since Barbin * published the 'Princesse de Clèves,' it still affords delightful reading. The scene is laid at a period still more remote from us, and yet it is impossible not to be struck with the probability of all the events it relates, and no previous knowledge is required to understand every allusion. All is truthful, and therefore eternally fresh. The human heart, whether it speaks the rounded periods of the sixteenth century, those of the seventeenth, or the phrase of yesterday —when it uses the language of its own inspiration, it is at all times the same. Simplicity, elegant and high bred, is the characteristic of this novel; and it is this simplicity which has caused it to appear ever fresh, whilst Mademoiselle de Scudéry's pompous delineations of unattainable perfections were out of fashion and unreadable fifty years after they had been penned.

Madame de Grignan, who in the spring of 1678 had gone to Livry with her mother and her two stepdaughters, was however anxiously desirous of joining Monsieur de Grignan.' Two of her letters addressed to

* A celebrated publisher of the time.

him, nearly the only ones that have been preserved from destruction, express strongly what were her feelings. She tells him that when she had to choose between her mother and her husband, she cannot hesitate, and she goes to her 'cher Comte.' She entreats that he will support her in her design of leaving Livry and Paris in the month of June. Monsieur de Grignan, however, judged with a less selfish affection, and after having received a letter from Madame de Sévigné, in which she transmits him the opinion of Fagon (whose celebrity was to raise him to the post of the king's medical adviser, and who was then in great repute), he decided that Madame de Grignan should remain where she was. Fagon's opinion had been pronounced before Monsieur de la Garde, and it was that the air of Provence was extremely unfavourable to Madame de Grignan. Madame de Sévigné, fully conscious of the interest she had in supporting this opinion, and fearful of displeasing her son-in-law, appealed over and over again to Monsieur de la Garde and to the Abbé de Grignan as witnesses to all she advances. Monsieur de Grignan was just enough to discern her real anxiety, and to see that solicitude for her daughter's health was even greater in Madame de Sévigné than her desire to keep her a few months longer. In truth, never was joy so alloyed as that which Madame de Grignan's presence gave to her mother. Added to the painful fears about the

health of one so dear, were those perpetual differences between the two women who could not spend a few months together without suffering; at least one suffered.

It is often difficult to trace the extent of Madame de Grignan's faults in those letters written by the mother after her daughter's departure, when all has been forgotten in the pang of the painful separation. But during the period of eighteen months that Madame de Grignan remained away from Provence, there were short intervals of a few days spent apart; the one or the other being either at Livry or in Paris alone. Then Madame de Sévigné's heart, full to overflowing, allows the bitterness felt to show itself. The letters we refer to are not dated with accuracy, but several circumstances concur to prove them to have been written at the time we allude to. One begins thus:—'I have slept badly; you overwhelmed me last night, and I have not been able to support your injustice. I see better than others all the admirable qualities God has given you. I admire your courage, your behaviour; I am persuaded that you have for me a real affection. All these truths are established and known to your friends and to the world. . . . What is there then? It is I who have all those imperfections with which you were charging yourself yesterday evening; and by accident I was yesterday complaining

in confidence to Monsieur le Chevalier that you had not enough indulgence for all those little trifles; that you sometimes made me feel them with some harshness, and that I was often humbled and pained.' Madame de Sévigné goes on in the same touching language, and she ends by begging her daughter not to be so severe on her faults.

How painful Madame de Grignan could make her presence to her mother is still more discernible in another letter, where Madame de Sévigné opens her heart without reserve. We see that this devoted mother, this enlightened and charming woman, was excluded from her daughter's confidence; that she was allowed no share in her plans; that her best and most devoted friends, those who, like Retz, she knew and felt might be of use and service to Madame de Grignan, were treated with a coldness, and even rudeness, which effectually put an end to any desire to serve or help her. It was a grief to Madame de Sévigné to see powerful friends like her 'dear eminence' thus kept at a distance, and humble ones, like her faithful Corbinelli, frowned upon. The judgment Bussy expressed that very year, in a letter to Madame de Scudéry, seems to have been but a too truthful representation of Madame de Grignan's character:—'That woman has wit, but of so sour a kind, her pride is so insupportable, that she will make herself as many

enemies as her mother has made friends and admirers.'

When we read the excuses the blind affection of Madame de Sévigné invents for her daughter's conduct, when we compare the one and the other—the pride, the sour spirit, all that Bussy accuses his young cousin of are discernible. After what reproaches, after what tears, must such lines as the following have been written!—'Once for all, my child, I must give myself the satisfaction of writing to you how I feel towards you. I know not how to tell it you, never being able to speak to you without timidity or awkwardness. Let this be your guide; I shall not even allude to the tenderness I feel for you; it is something marvellous. I know not what can result from the difference that you say exists in our minds; it must not be so great in our sentiments, or there is something extraordinary in me, as it does not lessen my attachment for you. It seems to me it is impossible to love any one better. I assure you, my daughter, I am occupied with you only, never saying or doing anything but what I imagine can be of service to you.'

After thus testifying her affection, and touching, if it could be touched, her daughter's heart by such tender expressions, she dwells on different incidents, all of which have caused her pain, and then adds:—'But to return to myself. You were telling me cruelly yes-

terday that I shall be too happy when you are gone, as you were to me the cause of a hundred torments, and did nothing but vex me. I cannot think of this speech without being cut to the heart and bursting into tears. My beloved, you must be ignorant of what you are to me, if you do not understand that all the sorrows which the excess of my tenderness for you may cause me, are not more agreeable to me than are all the pleasures of the world in which you have no share. . . . Admire the weakness of a true affection; it is that. In fact, your presence, a word of affection, a return, a caress, bring me round and make me forget everything. So that in truth you give me a thousand times more joy than pain. . . . I desire no answer. Kiss me only, and beg my pardon, but pardon for having said you believed I could feel happy in your absence.'

The winter passed for mother and daughter in a clouded happiness. It is to be inferred that Monsieur de Grignan came to Paris for a few months; but the fact is not mentioned; it is, however, more than probable that nothing but a visit from her husband reconciled Madame de Grignan to remain so long absent from her home. Her health was still weak and languishing: the winter had been extremely severe, and Madame de Sévigné, in a letter to Bussy, says that the sight of the pavement (which for weeks had been covered with mud and snow) gave them as much plea-

sure as the 'olive branch which showed that the earth was discovered.'

As soon as the spring of 1679 came it was with delight that Madame de Sévigné, accompanied by her daughter, resorted to Livry. Madame de Grignan was not expected to enjoy this charming solitude the whole summer, as her intention of returning to Provence seemed on the point of being accomplished. The 1st of June, writing to her good friend the Comte de Guitaut, Madame de Sévigné says—'My daughter already talks of nothing but stopping at Epoisses on her way to Grignan.' The journey, however, was deferred for several months. The expressions of Madame de Sévigné show that Monsieur de Grignan had returned to Paris; it was that, no doubt, which enabled her to gain a short respite, and allowed her time to breathe. 'Who has time has life,' writes she to the Guitauts, consoling herself on seeing the day of departure deferred.

Livry could be then enjoyed in peace. Madame de Grignan shared her mother's predilection for their country retreat, and we imagine they lived there in better harmony than in Paris. The soothing influence of its pure and balmy air was probably experienced by both. Madame de Sévigné, writing to Bussy, excuses herself for having delayed three weeks in answering him by saying—'Livry is my favourite spot for writing. There my mind and body are at peace, and whenever I

have a letter to answer, I put it off till my next visit there. But I am wrong, and I am determined to correct myself of these delays. I always say, that if I could but live two hundred years, I should become the most admirable person in the world. I amend easily enough, and I even find that in getting older I do so with more facility. I know that a thousand things are forgiven to the charms of youth which find no excuse when they have flown. One looks at everything with closer attention; nothing is pardoned: the favourable disposition to take all in good part exists no longer. It is no longer permitted to us to be wrong, and in that conviction pride makes us run after what can sustain us in this cruel destiny, which, in spite of us, gains on us every day.'

What a mind, what a heart, that could at past fifty talk and think thus! Is it not the true aspiration after perfection? How near it she must have been, she who thus was never weary of amending herself! Madame de Sévigné is spoken of at that period by an indifferent observer, as still positively handsome. She had but just turned the first page of that mature age she feared. In every season in life it was her destiny to shine. If her youth was brilliant and her middle age triumphant, old age, when it came, only touched her to impart to her more wisdom, more gentleness, more humility. To have a right to command admiration,

and to believe herself in need of indulgence, what charm must this have lent to her intercourse! Bussy himself, ever more struck with the force of his cousin's style, cannot refrain from praising it in the highest terms, saying, with perfect judgment, that it pleased him more than 'the regularity of Messieurs de l'Académie.'

At the beginning of August, Madame de Sévigné and the Grignans quitted Livry to prepare for the return to Provence. 'Those first appearances of separation' wrung the heart of Madame de Sévigné, and when, on the 12th of December, she announces to Guitaut that her daughter will start, without fail, her letter is full of her grief. 'The health of my daughter always makes me tremble;' and to this anguish was added the inevitable one of separation.

CHAPTER IV.

1679.

Departure of Madame de Grignan.—Solitude of Madame de Sévigné.—Remorse of Madame de Grignan.—Madame de Sévigné offers to bring up Pauline.—Madame de Sévigné at Livry.—She quotes a chapter of Montaigne to Madame de Grignan.—Its singular application to her own career.—The Baron de Sévigné in Brittany.—Madame de Sévigné cultivates the friendship of her daughter's acquaintances.—The Marquise de Vins.—Mademoiselle de Méri.—Reflections on friendship.—Madame de Sévigné leaves Livry.—Disgrace of Monsieur de Pomponne.—Madame de Sévigné's sympathy with the family.—Marriage of the Comte de la Roche Guyon and Mademoiselle de Louvois.—Dresses worn by the bride.—Marriage of the Prince de Conti and Mademoiselle de Blois.—The future Dauphine.

ON the 13th of September, 1679, the Grignans started. The first part of the journey was accomplished by water. Madame de Sévigné's letter to Guitaut, written the day before the separation, was to entreat him to meet her daughter, and to allow her the use of his *litière*, which would spare her the fatigues of a carriage.

It was a solitary evening, the first spent alone at the Hôtel de Carnavalet: no dear comtesse to whom to say good night; no Monsieur de Grignan; no more the

echoes of Mesdemoiselles de Grignans' voice ; no hope of seeing them the next day in the garden of the hôtel with their young brother 'le cher petit marquis.' The tears that had blinded Madame de Sévigné did not, says she, even allow her to read. She had nothing to do but think of the separation from her daughter, and of another separation—that an eternal one—which had taken place a few days before.

The Cardinal de Retz had died after a short illness, on the 24th of August. Madame de Sévigné's grief was extreme. 'It seems to me,' she had written, 'that all are leaving me, for the worst that can happen to me, the absence of my daughter, will soon overwhelm me.' When that separation came, Madame de Sévigné experienced it exactly as she had foreseen. Everything in the Hôtel de Carnavalet reminded her of her solitude ; at every hour of the day some gap was discovered, and every time the feeling of it came home to her with greater force. Her mind, her heart, were with that boat which carried away her daughter : it was the same constant and painful anxiety for her health ; she trembled incessantly that one so weak should be so heavily taxed.

Madame de Grignan had no sooner left her mother, than she experienced, as she had done before, remorse at her poor recognition of so much devotedness. She was but a short distance from Paris when already she

wished herself back, were it but for a week, to redeem the past; but it was not in such moments that Madame de Sévigné could harbour one thought of rancour against her daughter. 'I see nothing but what is amiable in you,' writes she. . . . 'Would that I could see you again at the Hôtel de Carnavalet, not for a week, not to do penance, but to embrace you, and to prove to you that I cannot be happy without you.' And then come again those earnest entreaties to her daughter to be more open, to speak with confidence to a mother whose only thought is of her; and thus avoid the baseless fabrics on which Madame de Grignan founded imaginary grievances. All on this subject is expressed with a moderation, a force, a gentleness equally admirable. It is a most eloquent and simple sermon, and a rule of conduct the most just and equitable.

The sameness of the topic prevents us from dwelling more upon it in these pages; for ourselves there is no weariness, yet we dare not tax too much the patience of others. The interest we feel in all that concerns Madame de Sévigné, the fervour with which we embrace her cause is so great, that it is necessary for us to remember at times that all do not know her, and consequently do not love her so well.

We have remarked before on the wisdom of Madame de Sévigné's conduct in what concerns her son-in-law,

and with what discernment she allowed him the first place and right to be consulted. For once she was going to waver from this good path, and allow her affection to overcome her reason. The position of Monsieur de Grignan left not a doubt that his presence was necessary in Provence: his wife naturally and reasonably wished to accompany him; she had remained eighteen months in Paris, and considered it high time to depart. Imperious reasons demanded it: the pecuniary position of Monsieur de Grignan was constantly embarrassed; on the other hand, the air of Grignan, its exposed situation—standing on a height, beaten on all sides by the mistral, and commanding a view of a barren and uncultivated plain—was prejudicial to Madame de Grignan. The fatigues of receptions at Aix were not more favourable to her health. All these difficulties were waived by Madame de Grignan; she discerned her husband's wishes, and they became hers. Madame de Sévigné viewed with grief her determination, and rendered Monsieur de Grignan responsible for an act she considered would be fatal in its consequences. The mother felt so strongly on this occasion that her pen cannot be restrained, and she writes:—'You can say as much for Monsieur de Grignan, for assuredly in this last journey you have considered nothing but his desires, which he even for some time concealed under polite forms. You

sought to discover them; you studied and watched him, and as soon as you saw that he wished rather more one thing than the other, you sacrificed your health, your repose, your life, the tenderness and the tranquillity of your mother, to gratify him. In a word, you have fulfilled to perfection the precept of the Gospel, that a woman must leave all to follow her husband. He deserves it, it is true; but such conduct must induce him to be still more careful of a life you expose so freely to please him.'

The circumstance that such instances of tender injustice can be quoted testifies better than anything else the habitual moderation and discretion of Madame de Sévigné, for when we consider how large a part of her life she had given to her daughter, there would have been nothing surprising if she had demanded a more than usual deference to her wishes. In general, however, she expresses herself rather timidly, before all things considering the welfare, and even the mere choice of her daughter. Monsieur de Grignan, who was equally in the right and in the wrong, must have perceived the displeasure he excited, and felt its injustice—it was one certainly—for at all periods he seems to have been ready to admit Madame de Sévigné's claims to the presence of her daughter.

On arriving at Grignan he did not write to Madame de Sévigné as he had promised to do, and when sending

affectionate messages to the whole family, Madame de Sévigné says,—'As to Monsieur le Comte, I only dare make him a curtsey.'

Madame de Grignan had left her daughter Pauline behind her in Provence. Nothing but his being the heir had earned for the little marquis the privilege of accompanying his mother. The charming Pauline, whom Madame de Sévigné so urged her daughter to love, was taken out of the convent where she had been during all those months. Her beauty, her ready wit, charmed her cold parent, who wrote about her with some enthusiasm, but at the same moment expressing her fear of becoming too much attached to the child. Madame de Sévigné did not believe, like her daughter, that indifference was a sufficient armour to protect us against the tribulations of this world; she therefore greeted with joy the tidings of Pauline's attractions, and of the affection she was exciting in her mother's heart. 'Keep her near you; do not deprive yourself of that pleasure; Providence will take care of her.'

There lay the real reluctance of Madame de Grignan to abandon herself to maternal affection. In her mind she still weighed whether Pauline should be given over to a convent, or whether she should remain in her paternal home. Madame de Sévigné clearly saw the bent of her daughter's reflections, and determined that another child should not be sacrificed. She comes for-

ward to offer to bring up Pauline; but with what delicacy, with what precautions, so as not to evoke those jealous fears so easily implanted in Madame de Grignan's heart! 'The good abbé was telling me this afternoon, that I ought to ask you for Pauline; that she would afford me both joy and amusement, and that I was more capable than I ever had been of bringing her up well. I was delighted with this idea. Let us think of it.'

Writing to the Guitauts, Madame de Sévigné says that Madame de Grignan would willingly intrust Pauline to her, but that she fears her child would supplant her in her mother's affections. Though the marquise often protests against the weaknesses of grandmothers who love their children's children better than their own, it is probable that had her desire been granted, a second Grignan, equally beloved with the first, might have been found in Pauline.

Madame de Sévigné, who had returned to Livry and to her books, had taken up her old friend Montaigne. It was ever with fresh delight she resumed her intercourse with the quaint and profound sage. Her mind was formed to understand and appreciate his; and in some instances he could hit the chord that vibrated most in her heart, more particularly when he discourses 'On the love of parents for their children.' It was indeed a meditation suited to one whose children

were her very all; but it was not so much the reflections of the good Montaigne which struck her, as his illustrations. Some of these went home to her in the application she could make of them, or rather she wished her daughter to make of them, and accordingly she begs Madame de Grignan to read over a certain passage. She alludes to a fact Montaigne relates of the Maréchal de Montluc, who had a son he dearly loved, but whom, from misguided prejudices, the maréchal never allowed to perceive his true feelings, and whom he treated with unrelenting severity. That son dies, and it is the misery of the father, expressed by his own lips, which the philosopher dwells upon. This idea, if suggested to Madame de Grignan, might perhaps make her reflect that it is not only needful to experience a feeling, but also to demonstrate it.

A still closer application was to be met with. The chapter is dedicated by Montaigne to Madame d'Estissac, and the eulogies she inspires him with might have been applied equally well to Madame de Sévigné. The similarity of facts and position is such that we cannot refrain from quoting a passage:—'Those who know the age at which Monsieur d'Estissac left you a widow, the great and honourable alliances which have been offered to you,—as numerous as to any woman of France of your condition; the perseverance and firmness you have showed during

so many years, through difficulties of every sort, in the management of your affairs; the happy issue arrived at by your sole wisdom and conduct — those who know this will say with me, there exists not in our time a greater example of maternal affection.' It was but justice to herself when Madame de Sévigné recognized in that picture the counterpart of her own existence. She had but to look around to perceive that she was indeed 'a great example of maternal affection.'

That maternal affection would appear even more partial than it was were we longer to lose sight of our favourite baron. Brave and fortunate once more, and having been honourably mentioned after that last battle near Mons, fought between the Prince of Orange and Luxembourg, Sévigné returned to Paris on the signing of peace, and thence started for Brittany to shine at the Etats. He was accompanied by Coulanges, and together they paced the avenues of the Rochers, admiring their beauty. Already that taste for a quiet country life showed itself in Sévigné. His mother did not hear of it with any pleasure, and was still more alarmed when a rumour reached her that he was making violent love to a demoiselle Coste, a person of more than thirty, without fortune, and of an inferior family. The correspondents of the marquise predicted that it would end in a marriage; but

knowing her son better, she did not believe he would go to such an extremity. She however strongly blamed him for troubling the existence of a person he would most likely forget in a few weeks, and who for his sake was refusing a suitable alliance. The reprobation of Madame de Sévigné was the more strong as she felt convinced there was no real love in the case.

Sévigné appears to have been one in whom were blended some of the happiest qualities with imperfections which most effectually marred all that was excellent. His conduct had been most favourably viewed at the Etats. He had received many little honorary distinctions, which seemed destined to pave the way to others of more importance, and no sooner had he obtained this desirable result than he hastens to draw attention upon himself by his passion for Mademoiselle Coste, a circumstance that would only cover him with ridicule. His presence was also required in Paris, that he might fulfil the duties of a position as important in time of peace as in war. Monsieur de la Trousse, Madame de Sévigné's first cousin, and who commanded the Gendarmes Dauphins, was loud in his irony about the prolonged absence of Sévigné, for which his mother strove to render herself responsible. La Trousse went so far as to say that such being the case, Sévigné had better sell his com-

mission and become her agent. All this had disposed Madame de Sévigné to receive severely her truant son; but when he came her anger was forgotten, and the speech, elaborately arranged under 'seventeen points,' was not uttered. But we have anticipated, for Sévigné did not return until February, 1680.

In November, 1679, he was still in Brittany, writing to his mother of 'a hundred follies.' 'My son,' says she, 'tells me that there is in him one person that adores me, and another that detests me; and that the other day both were fighting desperately in the avenues of the Rochers. I answer him, that I wished one had killed the other, so that I might not have three children.'

Whatever subjects of temporary discontent Sévigné gave his mother, and his follies were many, he never wounded her heart. He may have caused torment, anxiety, solicitude; but willingly he never inflicted pain. He resembled Madame de Sévigné in kind consideration, and always showed it in his tender inquiries about his sister, of whom he seems at no time to have felt any jealousy.

When alone in Paris, Madame de Sévigné had no occupation which pleased her better than to obey her daughter's wishes to the very letter, and to show her daughter's friends every attention. Sometimes it was a pleasing task; for example, when it concerned

one so amiable as the Marquise de Vins. In truth, whatever Madame de Sévigné may say of the disparity of age and the unsuitableness of such a friendship for herself, we believe it concerned her a great deal more than Madame de Grignan, and that Madame de Vins, being what she describes her, could not but regard it a rare privilege and pleasure to be favoured with the affection and confidence of Madame de Sévigné. 'The friendship she has for you harmonizes as perfectly with my taste, as her age does little with mine; but her mind is so ripe and so solid, that she may be regarded as old in that respect. It was the same with you; you jumped lightly over all the minor miseries of young persons.'

Madame de Vins shared the long-established feeling existing in her brother-in-law's family for Madame de Sévigné. Monsieur de Pomponne, minister of state, valued her as much as when in exile he received her letters, and her presence was always courted at Pomponne, where she was welcomed with every mark of affection. These testimonies were doubly valuable to Madame de Sévigné, who hoped that such powerful intercession might at last bring a favourable change in Monsieur de Grignan's position, and obtain for him what she much desired, a place at court.

If it was agreeable to have to cultivate the friendship of Madame de Vins, it was less so to have to

attend to Mademoiselle de Méri, and bear her cross rebuffs and lamentations. Madame de Grignan appears to have had a predilection for this person, the least amiable perhaps of all her family. Mademoiselle de Méri was the daughter of the Marquise de la Trousse, the aunt of Madame de Sévigné. No doubt a meagre fortune and constant ailments were excuses for that sour spirit which she possessed, and Madame de Sévigné is the first to suggest excuses. 'The chevalier takes care of her also, and as soon as I am in Paris I shall assuredly do my duty by her. If we were not so nearly related as we are, and did not Christian charity inspire me with a desire to relieve her, the knowledge that it pleases you would be enough to make me accomplish things a thousand times more difficult.'

No one understood how to prove affection as did Madame de Sévigné, and conscious of that herself she tells her daughter—'I think I shall write an essay on friendship. I believe that so much depends on it, and that a thousand things in our conduct are to be avoided that those we love may not suffer. I find there is an infinity of instances when we give pain which might be avoided with a little foresight, and if we had as much consideration as we ought to have for those nearest to our hearts. I should show also in this essay that there exist a hundred ways of proving our affection

without expressing it by our actions, and even should the lips assure the contrary. In what I say I make no allusion to any one, but what is written is written.'

The reproach concealed under all this is that ill-timed return to Grignan. Madame de Sévigné could not forgive her son-in-law for being the cause of it, and she accuses her daughter of having consulted his wishes, as in ancient times 'men consulted the bleeding hearts of victims.' The grievance seemed in part well founded, for Madame de Grignan did not improve in health, and it was only the truth which Madame de Sévigné uttered in this sad and solemn warning. 'Be convinced of one thing, which is, that without health all the business of life is suspended; one can neither come nor go but with incredible difficulty. In a word, to be without health is not to live.'

Madame de Sévigné knew how to enjoy every boon that was hers (after all the only true way to be happy), and prized at its just value that robust constitution which God had given her. Illness and grief were alike repulsive to one gifted with such bright and happy spirits, and such a full flow of life. It was those endowments which imparted a charm to all the exterior objects which surrounded her. She could step out into her garden of Livry, breathe its fresh air, and view its green alleys with the same zest as in her early youth. It was a similar gift she desired

earnestly for her daughter. Is it not a blessed faculty to be able to derive from nature such tranquil and solid pleasures as those described in the few following lines?—'I leave this spot with regret, my daughter, for the country is still beautiful, and all that had been ravaged by insects has, with your permission, taken the liberty to bud forth again, and is as green as in the spring of the finest years. The higher and lower palisades are clad in their warm tints of autumn which painters know so well how to turn to account. The tall elms are beginning to lose their foliage; but we do not regret their leaves. The country on the whole is still smiling. I spent my days there alone with my books, and felt but the weariness I must experience in every place where you are not.'

All these charms so keenly enjoyed were soon to vanish as winter was drawing nigh, if had not already set in, and the first week of November saw Madame de Sévigné back at the Hôtel de Carnavalet. She is no sooner there than her only idea is to improve and alter in her house, what is displeasing to the capricious comtesse. 'The good abbé,' says she, 'is as much disposed to do so as I am.'

Madame de Grignan, who had the merit of not being unconscious of her faults, represented to her mother that she was wrong in desiring her return, for her letters were better than her conversation.

Such a supposition is always warmly rejected. 'Ah, if you knew,' says the marquise, 'the power of one of your words, of a look, of a caress, and from what distant countries they can bring me back, you would understand that nothing can compensate for your absence.' But in this thirst for her daughter's presence she forgets not the little ones at Grignan, and the word in their favour is always forthcoming. 'Enjoy her [Pauline]; do not deprive yourself of all these little consolations; life is so short—it passes so rapidly.' Madame de Sévigné, while urging her daughter to profit by every source of satisfaction in her power, had for herself few at hand; but it was in her heart that lay that unquenchable source of consolation which cheered her on her solitary path. Solitude, what a word! who can utter it, who can experience it, or even look forward to its arrival without feeling that it is for a loving heart a grief surpassing all others? Hardness of heart alone assures independence, for those who have it not must depend on others, and, alas! how many sufferings do those others, beloved or not, inflict!

No one more than Madame de Sévigné was so convinced of the impossibility of being completely happy, but at the same time she felt that on her and hers there was a blight which was ever destroying in the bud whatever well-founded hopes of happy changes

they might be contemplating. 'I have but to wish a thing never to enjoy it.' It was a sad thought, but the closer we become acquainted with the life of Madame de Sévigné, the more we perceive that this reflection was spoken from a well-grounded conviction. It is not that she repined. No, she was not one of those to whom can be applied a remark she made on Mademoiselle de Méri—'There evidently is in complaining some greater pleasure than one thinks.'

We have seen Madame de Sévigné as the friend of Fouquet, the friend of Retz, and now she is the friend of Pomponne. Two disgraces has she witnessed and shared in part, and a third is coming, the most regretted of all, perhaps, because its consequences were to affect Madame de Grignan more than herself. The advantages to be hoped for from the goodwill and efforts of Fouquet and Retz were personal; the services that could be hoped for from Monsieur de Pomponne concerned the Grignans. Never was a catastrophe more sudden than that which fell upon this good friend of Madame de Sévigné. We have spoken before of his character, his virtues, and his singular aptitude for the post he filled. It was those very merits which occasioned his fall.

Louvois and Colbert could not patiently brook a Minister of Foreign Affairs who allowed them to take no part in his administration, and who pretended to

depend on the king alone. It was difficult, however, to sap the position of one who, in private and public life, was above reproach, who commanded esteem and confidence as well as admiration; but two men like Colbert and Louvois could not renounce such a desire, and at last a plan was discovered. The king, who detested all that bore the semblance of Jansénisme, had appeared to forget his usual aversion where Pomponne was concerned; but the constantly repeated comments on the danger of employing the nephew of the great Arnauld in the most secret affairs of state, began to have their influence on the monarch. Every trifling irritation or displeasure on the part of Louis was taken advantage of, and the causes which produced them exaggerated, till at last a trivial circumstance contributed to destroy all the influence of the too conscientious minister. The marriage of the dauphin was being negotiated with the sister of the Elector of Bavaria. Pomponne, whose only available point was an excessive fondness for his country residence, to which, from its close proximity to Paris, he was constantly tempted to repair, unwisely calculated that he might go there for a few days to wait for an important answer to some of his despatches.

The movements of the unfortunate minister had been watched. Louvois, who had emissaries everywhere in France, had some also in Bavaria. The letters arrived

when Pomponne was in the country; time was lost; and Louvois was the first to inform the king of the news so impatiently expected. Louis' ire was excited, the negligence of Pomponne cruelly distorted, and the next day the minister was disgraced. Let us see how Madame de Sévigné announces it to her daughter:—

'I have to surprise and grieve you, my dear child. Monsieur de Pomponne is disgraced. He received an order on Saturday evening as he was returning from Pomponne, to give up his charge. . . . It was Monsieur Colbert who paid him the compliment, assuring him that he was in despair at being obliged, etc. . . . Monsieur de Pomponne inquired whether he might not have the honour of speaking to the king, and of learning from his lips what had brought upon him that thunder-bolt. He was told that he could not. So he wrote to the king, expressing his extreme sorrow, and his perfect ignorance of what had occasioned his disgrace. . . . Monsieur de Pomponne is not one of those ministers on whom a disgrace falls opportunely to teach them humanity, which most of them have nearly forgotten. Fortune had only given employment to his virtues for the benefit of others.

'On the Friday we, Monsieur de Chaulnes, Caumartin, and I, had been, as I have told you, to Pom-

ponne, where we found him and the ladies, who received us cheerfully. We conversed the whole evening; we played at chess. Ah, what a checkmate was being prepared for him at St.-Germain! He went there the next morning; because a courier was expected. . . . As for us, we started from Pomponne after dinner, leaving the ladies there, Madame de Vins having intrusted me with a thousand compliments for you. . . . They [Madame de Pomponne and Madame de Vins] arrived in Paris at two" (having learnt what had happened). "You can represent to yourself their interview with Monsieur de Pomponne, and what they felt on meeting; such a different position from that they enjoyed the day before. For myself, I learnt the news by the Abbé de Grignan. I own to you it went straight to my heart. I called at their door in the evening. I went in, and found them all three. Monsieur de Pomponne embraced me without saying a word; the ladies could not restrain their tears, nor I mine. My dearest daughter, you could not have kept yours back; it was a painful sight. And the fact that we had separated a few hours before under such different circumstances added to our emotion.'

Madame de Sévigné now, as on all similar occasions that had preceded it, became only more attached to her friends in their misfortune. 'Disgrace will not

banish me from that house,' she says; and it is with perfect sincerity she shares all the anxieties consequent on this sudden change of fortune. She is never weary of praising Monsieur de Pomponne's fortitude and resignation. 'He is extremely regretted,' says she. 'A minister with such a disposition, with a quickness of apprehension, and a kindness like his, is so rare that it must not be wondered at if such a loss is felt. I often see the family. The other day I was affected on seeing Monsieur de Pomponne enter with an amiable countenance, without sadness or discouragement. . . . We shall know again that Monsieur de Pomponne, so perfect, such as we knew him formerly. . . . I am so inclined to pay them attention that I put a restraint upon myself, for fear it should have the appearance of affectation or false generosity. They are all satisfied with me.' And then comes the usual reflection:—'We must fall back on Providence, of whom Monsieur de Pomponne is a worshipper and a disciple, and how can we live without the belief in that divine doctrine? We should have to hang ourselves twenty times a day; and even with that belief; it is sometimes difficult to refrain from doing so.'

While Madame de Sévigné was consoling the Pomponnes in their affliction, she had to congratulate others on their happiness. Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld's

grandson, the Comte de la Roche Guyon, was about to marry Mademoiselle de Louvois ; and on the occasion of this union persons already loaded with favours received new distinctions. A dukedom was created for the bridegroom, and all that magnificence could invent was lavished to give lustre to the nuptial ceremony. 'I went to the marriage of Mademoiselle de Louvois,' writes Madame de Sévigné. 'What shall I say of it? That it was magnificent; that there were illuminations; that all France was there in dresses worked with gold and precious stones. The church a brasier of fire and flowers. . . . In the turmoil, questions were asked without waiting for answers, compliments without knowing what was said, civilities spoken without knowing whom one addressed, feet embarrassed in the trains. In the midst of all this came out a few questions about your health, to which, as I did not hurry myself to answer, those who put them have remained in ignorance and indifference about it. Oh, vanity of vanities!'

It is rather curious to see what signified magnificence in those days, and how very poor any extravagance of our time would appear when compared with it. For example, Mademosielle de Louvois had dresses such as these:—For the marriage ceremony, which took place at St.-Roch, a dress of black velvet, gorgeously studded with diamonds, and a skirt of gold

brocade. On her return from the church she wore a bodice and upper skirt of gold and blue brocade, embroidered with flowers of crimson edged with silver, and green leaves edged with gold. Her skirt was silver and gold, embroidered with designs in purple silk, and lined with crimson and silver.

Let us figure to ourselves that church filled with all the fashion of France, clothed in garments of similar splendour, and then the expression which paints it as a 'brasier of fire and flowers' is understood. Not only did the women appear in those gorgeous stuffs, where gold, silver, and the lightest hues were blended in rich harmony, but men were coats of the same splendid materials. We notice all this, not only because it has that curious interest which we so naturally feel for all that is past without redemption, but also because it strikes us that nothing must be neglected which can render easier the task of imagining in life that great world now lying in the dust.

Madame de Grignan, whom her mother saw with ever recurring regret banished from those scenes of magnificence, had left Grignan and gone to Aix, to play the part of a queen in her small court. The distaste she felt for Provence was greatly diminished by that high place which she there occupied, but though this circumstance gave great pleasure to Madame de Sévigné also, she could not but dwell

anew on her fear that the fatigue might be too much for her daughter. Favourable reports brought to her by people who had seen Madame de Grignan did not satisfy her, for with great truth she remarked—'We are always perfectly well for those who do not care about us.' And making her letters ever longer and more interesting, she begs her daughter to answer them by a few lines only.

Madame de Sévigné constantly dwells on the grief which absence, and at that time distance, created. Answers to her letters reached her only when the facts had lost their first interest. Was it joy, was it sorrow, the sympathy demanded came only when the feelings that originated it were nearly exhausted. Madame de Sévigné knew the share that Madame de Grignan would take in the fall of Monsieur de Pomponne, but the letter which was intended to afford him the condolence of the family of Grignan reached Paris when all had been said, and by the great majority forgotten, on the subject. Events pressed too closely; attention was soon diverted. What was even the wedding of a grandson of La Rochefoucauld, when the heir to the throne of France was expecting his bride? and when the eldest of the king's daughters born of the Duchesse de la Vallière, was affianced in regal pomp to the purest blood of Bourbon, in the person of the Prince de Conti, nephew of the Great Condé? The king

had a tender affection for this daughter, who resembled him, and her alliance to a prince of his blood pleased and flattered him. The union was one to which, a rare occurrence in such cases, was added the trivial circumstance of mutual inclination. It is charmingly described by Madame de Sévigné, and shows the king in so favourable a light that we cannot refrain from quoting the passage :—

'The court is enlivened by the marriage of the Prince de Conti and Mademoiselle de Blois. They are in love, as in romances. The king finds much pleasure in their mutual inclination : he spoke tenderly to his daughter, and told her he loved her so much that he could not think of her being separated from him. "La petite" was so touched and so contented that she could not help crying; and then the king added that he saw clearly she had an aversion for the Prince de Conti. Her tears then redoubled; her little heart could not contain so much joy. The king himself related this little scene, and it pleased everybody. As to the Prince de Conti, he was transported with joy, and knew not what he did or said : he pushed aside all the people he met to go and find Mademoiselle de Blois. Madame de Colbert [who had brought up the princesse] wished that he should see her only in the evening. He forced all the doors, threw himself at Mademoiselle de Blois' feet and

kissed her hand. She, without more ado, embraced him, and then had again recourse to tears. This good little princesse is so affectionate and pretty, that one feels inclined to eat her.'

Very different seemed to be the future dauphine, at least in every charm of person. Her picture had arrived, and it was judged a very doubtful beauty: her wit and good figure, however, were much praised. 'She wrote also,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'letters which were pronounced as so reasonable, sensible, and just, that we are perfectly persuaded of her superior understanding.' Curiosity was excited; and violent rivalry was produced amongst those who vied with one another to gain the envied posts of ladies in waiting to the dauphine. To Madame de Maintenon had been given the place of second dame d'atours, the Marquise de Rochefort being the first, and the Duchesse de Richelieu the dame d'honneur.

The favour of the monarch at the time of his son's marriage (we must recollect that he was but forty-one) was jealously disputed. Face to face stood Madame de Montespan and Madame de Maintenon; the one upheld by long habit, her children, and the high position she occupied as 'Surintendante de la Maison de la Reine;' the other, whose presence was becoming every day more and more necessary to the king, and finding herself permanently attached to

court on account of the place she held in the dauphine's household; and between Madame de Montespan and Madame de Maintenon, 'beautiful as an angel,' without wit, and with a warm heart, was the young Mademoiselle de Fontanges, the worshipped goddess of the hour. She and Madame de Montespan appeared together at the chapel at Versailles in the same 'tribune' like two divinities!

CHAPTER V.

1680.

Madame de Sévigné's anxiety about the expenses of the Grignans.—Madame de Grignan's wishes in regard to her mother.—Madame de Sévigné's answer.—Universality of her genius.—The affair of the poisons.—La Voisin, La Vigoureux, Le Sage.—Monsieur de Luxembourg in the Bastille.—Behaviour of Madame de Bouillon before her judges.—Death of La Voisin.—Return of Sévigné from Brittany.—He desires to leave the army.—Regret of his mother.—Madame de Sévigné's hope for her daughter's future.—Illness and death of Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld.—Sympathy of Madame de Sévigné for Madame de la Fayette.—Arrival of the Dauphine.—Her personal appearance.—Madame de Sévigné goes to St.-Germain.—Death of Madame de Longueville.—Madame de Sévigné prepares to start for Brittany.

SUCH was the state of affairs when the year 1679 came to a close, and Madame de Sévigné addressed her affectionate good wishes to Provence. None who were dear to her daughter were forgotten, and we may be sure that in her heart there was a tender and sad feeling for her 'dear little Adhémar' (Marie-Blanche) in the convent, on whom a few weeks before she had been begging her daughter to have pity.

It was not without reason that better days were desired for the house of Grignan: the embarrassed state of

the Comte de Grignan's affairs was every year hastening his ruin. No timely warning had been effectual in putting a stop to the ostentation of the pair. Though living in incessant anxiety they continued to keep a splendid and open house; and added to the expenses rendered indispensable by the husband's position of Lieutenant-général, was the superfluous one of gambling. Reproofs administered long ago, in all-foreseeing wisdom by Madame de Sévigné, had not been listened to; the evil had gone on increasing. 'It is true,' writes Madame de Sévigné, after having expressed her warm and affectionate sympathy on the sadness of Madame de Grignan's sufferings, 'that your play alarms me. Monsieur de Grignan hates *la bassette*, but likes *l'hombre*, and knows nothing about it; for you cannot call it playing when he loses every day: it is doubling the necessary expenses. This is what I cannot tolerate; and when you tell me it is a bone you must throw to your company, I know full well they must have one; but let them devour their own bones between themselves; and for a thousand reasons I would not, to please them, deprive myself of my resources. This is my advice; you will follow it if God wills. I desire it from my heart, and shall be distressed if, for the sake of a mistaken idea of good breeding and politeness, you deprive yourself of what can keep up the ex-

penses of your establishment. I see in this conduct a great want of forethought, and I cannot help telling Monsieur de Grignan my opinion.'

If from the first the reasonable counsels of a prudent affection had been attended to, husband and wife would not have suffered so much under the heavy pressure of their debts. These embarrassments preying on Madame de Grignan's mind had a great share in causing her delicate state of health, though, as we have seen, she was not on that account disposed to take any the greater care of it. Yet she evidently considered herself destined for an early death, for in the letter in which she sent her good wishes to Madame de Sévigné for the new year, she expressed a desire that her mother's life might be longer than her own.

With what terror such a thought was rejected by Madame de Sévigné can be conceived. We fancy we can picture the eager tremulousness with which she wrote in answer :—'If I had a heart of crystal, so that you could look into it, you would see the sad and mournful grief which overcame me, my dear child, when I read your wishes that my life might consist of more years than yours ; and you would recognize with what sincerity and fervour I desire that Providence should not alter the order of Nature, which in giving me birth ordained me to be your mother, con-

sequently to come in the world long before you. It is right and the law of the universe that I should go first; and God, to whom all hearts are opened, knows well with what earnestness I pray Him that this order may be observed with respect to me.'

What image can be truer, or more appropriate to the subject? We see into that 'heart of crystal,' which had no blemish to cloud its purity. Passages like this one bear the impress of such intense sincerity, that those who feel it not must be ignorant of what it is to write under the impulse of the heart. The more we read this correspondence, the greater becomes our surprise at the so often repeated remark, that Madame de Sévigné had more wit than feeling. It strikes us as wonderful that any one could ever have given utterance to such an impression. Still it exists, and those who have lived in constant communion with that 'heart of crystal,' so transparent in all its elevated and pure inspirations, think it surpasses in its rare merit even that dazzling wit and eloquence so much vaunted.

Harmony arises from disparity; for everything, or nearly everything, that strikes our eye as harmonious is in glaring contrast when analyzed. A beautiful landscape, with green and rich pastures, a pure sky of unsullied blue, a rivulet of azure transparency, cattle grazing at leisure in the fields, and a white

house hidden under the leaves of an oak—is it not as harmonious a whole as can be imagined? Do not all those elements melt as it were into one another so as to compose a scene of glad tranquillity? It was so with the genius of Madame de Sévigné; it would not possess that perfect solidity, it would not be so complete, if it were not composed of every varied gift. If one had been wanting; if some faculty had acquired predominancy over the others, the great woman we now speak of might have shone, her letters might be quoted, but her place would be only in the rank of those who in their life became competitors for fame and are now forgotten; whereas, she stands in front with the few who have achieved immortality. Sublime when she wills, austere or frivolous, biting or ironical, gentle and touching, there is no chord that she cannot make to resound.

Madame de Sévigné in the letters she writes to her daughter at this period, marvels at the number of strange and interesting events which had happened since Madame de Grignan returned to Provence. Not the less curious of all was that scandalous affair of poisoning, when a man of the name of Le Sage, and two low women, La Voisin and La Vigoureux, accused the highest in the land of having had recourse to their sorcery to bring to a violent death their nearest relatives. It is to be imagined what effect such declara-

tions excited, and what surprise and terror were felt when a great captain like the Maréchal de Luxembourg, and women who had known the height of favour like the Comtesse de Soissons and the Duchesse de Bouillon—the two powerful nieces of Mazarin—were denounced as criminals.

Madame de Soissons, the dark and haughty Mancini, who seems to have learnt in her youth the black art of dissimulation, and who left on all the impression of her guilt, did not face the trial, but on the first alarm fled. Monsieur de Luxembourg, and many whom those wretched creatures accused, had probably only committed the folly of consulting them about the future, and allowed the ridiculous invocations of the devil to be performed in their presence. What could be the feelings of that valiant soldier, of that proud scion of the house of Montmorency, when he heard the doors of the Bastille close upon him? 'He was confined,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'in one of those horrible cells in the tower, where light hardly penetrates. Fancy what it must have been to hear those heavy bolts drawn upon him, and if from excess of fatigue he slept, what an awakening!'

The sensation the arrest caused was small when compared with that of the day which saw such exalted personages standing at the bar as murderers. For great credulity, a foolish curiosity, they were now to

answer as if for terrible offences. 'Mesdames de Bouillon and de Tingry,' writes the marquise, 'were questioned on Monday at the Arsenal. Their noble families accompanied them to the gate. It does not now appear that there is anything very black in their follies; they are not even dark gray. If nothing more is discovered, persons of that consequence might have been spared so great a scandal.'

Whether from insolence or security, the Duchesse de Bouillon faced her judges with admirable firmness. 'Madame de Bouillon entered the court like a little queen,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'and sat down in a chair that had been provided for her. Instead of answering the first question, she requested that what she was going to say might be taken down in writing; which was:—That she was there solely out of respect for the king, and not for the tribunal, which she did not recognize, as she did not intend derogating from her ducal privileges. She refused to say another word till what she had already said was written. She then took off her glove, and showed a beautiful hand. Her answers were sincere, except that of her age. "Do you know La Vigoureux?" "No." "Do you know La Voisin?" "Yes." "Why did you wish to get rid of your husband?" "I get rid of him! you have but to ask him what he thinks; he gave me his hand up to this door." "But why did you so often visit

La Voisin ?" "Because I wished to see the sibyls she had promised to show me ; such a company was worth a few steps." . . . All this spoken in a gay and disdainful tone. . . . She was received by all her friends and relations with adoration. So pretty, artless, and natural did she appear, and so possessed of boldness and tranquillity of mind.'

Madame de Bouillon having been asked by La Reynie, one of the judges, if she had seen the devil, she answered, 'Yes ;' that she saw him at that very moment; that he was very ugly, and dressed as a Councillor of State. After that she carried the day.

Monsieur de Luxembourg did not show the same self-possession. 'He is not a man, not even a little man ; he is not even a woman, unless it be a nervous woman. . . . When one has nothing better to carry to the Bastille, it is wise to run,' writes the marquise to her daughter. It was terrible for one who had commanded the armies of France to be exposed to such imputations.

One of the wretched creatures who had accused Monsieur de Luxembourg, and for whom no name was sacred, expiated her crimes with cynical courage. 'She knew her sentence as early as last Monday,' writes the marquise, 'a thing quite unusual. In the evening she said to her guards, "What, shall we not sup ?" She ate with them at midnight from caprice, drank a great

deal of wine, and sang more than twenty drinking songs. On the Tuesday she was subjected to the *question ordinaire et extraordinaire;* then dined, and afterwards slept eight hours. She was confronted with Mesdames de Dreux and Le Féron while still lying on her mattress. It is not known what she said, and it is believed that strange things will yet transpire. She supped at night, and, exhausted as she was, began anew her scandals; and when reminded that she had better think of God, and, instead of her profane songs, sing an *Ave, maris stella,* or a *Salve,* she sang them both in ridicule.'

The next day she was burnt at a slow fire. Her imprecations were heard to the last moment, she having resisted to the utmost of her strength.

We have dwelt before on these terrible executions when recording the death of the Marquise de Brinvilliers; but the scandal caused by the affair of La Voisin and her consorts was too great to be passed over in silence. 'Nothing more is said about the Maréchal de Luxembourg,' writes Madame de Sévigné. 'I admire how things are forgotten. Time is in truth a river that carries everything with it.'

In the beginning of February, 1680, the Baron de Sévigné had at last returned from Brittany. We know already how fondly he was received by his indulgent mother, who nevertheless was in despair at his

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enthusiasm for a country life. It was but a short time since, at a great sacrifice, he had purchased his position of lieutenant of the Gendarmes Dauphins, and without consulting Madame de Sévigné he was already signifying his desire to get rid of it, and by such conduct wounding his mother's feelings. She thought, with justice, that she had a prior claim to be consulted on this occasion, and seeing her son's desire to manage his own affairs, and settle all accounts with her, she remarks with some bitterness—'I shall for the first time in my life think of my own interests; he is setting me the example. I wish to take the expense of his commission off my shoulders: it weighed nothing to me when he liked it, and now it weighs forty thousand écus. I shall try and find pleasure in this relief, of which but for him I should never have thought. On the contrary, for I appreciated highly all the advantage of the place he is in; but my ideas change along with his, and I too shall love my liberty.'

Madame de Sévigné had looked forward to a career for her son such as he seemed eminently fitted for: she could not sympathize with him in his desire 'to be no longer attached like the wolf (in the fable of La Fontaine), and in his assurance that three thousand louis in his chest would give him more satisfaction.

At the very moment when Sévigné, in the flower of his age, was maturing his plans of retiring from the

world, the Grignan family were receiving new distinctions. It was not, it is true, the head of the house, but his two brothers who were sharing the gifts of the king. The bishopric of Evreux was conferred on the 'Bel Abbé,' and the other brother, the brave chevalier, was attached to the dauphin as Messire.

It was with delight Madame de Sévigné saw this happy turn of fortune, and she augured from it the most favourable results for her son-in-law; she could not but believe the king reserved something for the eldest, having treated so well the younger brothers. But Madame de Grignan, who strongly disapproved of Sévigné's intention of renouncing the good and firm position he had at court, seemed nevertheless to resemble him a little, when she gave up for herself and her husband any hopes of a more brilliant future. It was a painful thing to be said to Madame de Sévigné, and how could she, still so young and strong in body and mind, imagine that her children thought themselves too old for any change in their circumstances, and that both gave up ambition?

We fancy the motives that inspired this resignation were very different. In the baron it was a genuine love of independence, of a country life spent at ease, added to a wish to indulge a natural indolence impatient of all constraint. In the Grignans, it was a proud disappointment, wishing to appear contented,

and transferring all their baffled hopes on the head of the young heir. 'But,' exclaims Madame de Sévigné, 'what I cannot understand is, that you should regard yourselves as people of another world, who are no longer qualified to think of fortune and the favours of his majesty; and why do you hold yourselves as put on one side? How old are you, if you please? One of you is Monsieur de la Trousse's age, and the other that of Madame de Coëtquen, who surely classes herself amongst the youngest of the young; and why do you wish to bury yourselves like Philemon and Baucis? Are you not loved? are you not both amiable? Can you render no services to the king? Is your name an obscure one? Is the king not occupied in doing good? Do not past favours guarantee future ones? Are times always the same? Do we not ourselves change? Why neglect yourselves, and look only to a remote future for the little marquis? I know not whether it is because I can have but a small part in such a distant anticipation, or because I do not share the caprice of grandmothers, who pass over their own offspring to go and play with the rattle of their grandchildren; but I own my affection goes not beyond you, and I am far from approving this view of the subject. I find you no more reasonable than your brother.'

Madame de Sévigné could not reconcile herself to this conduct in her daughter. It was her daughter,

and not the little marquis, she desired to see the favourite of Fortune, and above all she pined for anything that would bring back Madame de Grignan to Paris. 'Alas,' says she, 'life for me is so short now, and passes so quickly! How do we employ it? It is our misfortune not to be wholly occupied with God: can we spend it better than loving and living in the midst of those who are dear to us? But upon this point we must obey and submit to God, who sufficiently demonstrates on a thousand occasions, to those who take the trouble to look, that He is the director of all human affairs.'

By the disgrace of Monsieur de Pomponne, Madame de Sévigné found herself deprived of a devoted and powerful auxiliary in her efforts for the bettering of her daughter's position, and was after a very brief interval afflicted by the death of another who could do much by his protection for the Grignans, and whom for many reasons Madame de Sévigné highly valued. Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, whom gout had for years rendered an invalid, and whose life it had imperilled more than once, had an attack in the month of March of this year which terminated his life. Madame de Sévigné, from her affection for Madame de la Fayette, followed with anxiety all the phases of the illness. On the 15th of March, 1680, she writes to her daughter:—'I fear greatly that this time we

shall lose Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld; his fever has not abated. He received the Sacrament yesterday; but his disposition and resignation are worthy of admiration. He is prepared in his conscience; that is settled. For the rest, he talks of his illness and death as if it were that of a neighbour, and sees the near approach of the end of his life with perfect calmness, even listens to the discussions of the doctors who argue his case before him . . . without deigning to give his opinion.' Madame de Sévigné adds—'It is not in vain that all his life he has been composing his reflections: he has approached those last moments in such a manner that they have nothing new or strange for him.'

The héro of the Fronde, the lover of Madame de Longueville, passed those last days in the calm security of a philosopher and a Christian. When his son, the Prince de Marsillac, who was to his father an intimate friend, arrived in haste, and could hardly conceal his grief, Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld received him with perfect tranquillity, not even mentioning his illness. Madame de la Fayette, now supported by a ray of hope, now broken-hearted, when she despaired she was consoled and cheered by the friend of her whole life. It was from Madame de la Fayette's house that Madame de Sévigné wrote to her daughter on the 15th, and two days later she announces the fatal issue in

terms that show how deeply she shared in this bereavement:—'My head is so full of this affliction, and of the excessive sorrow of our poor friend, that I must speak about it.' Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld died in the arms of his son, whose grief at the loss of his father was extreme. 'But,' adds Madame de Sévigné, with truth, 'there still remains to him the king and the court. All his family will be again in their places; but where will Madame de la Fayette meet with such a friend, such community of sentiment, such delightful intercourse, such confidence, such consideration for herself and her son? She is infirm, she keeps her room, and does not gad about the streets. Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld was sedentary also; this rendered them necessary to each other. Nothing could be compared to the confidence and charm of their friendship. My daughter, think of it; you will see that it is impossible to sustain a greater loss, and one which time can less easily compensate. I have not quitted her during all those days.'

We see that Madame de Sévigné's warm heart and vivid imagination made her conceive in all their sadness even the sorrows that were not her own. She did her best to comfort Madame de la Fayette; but a heart like hers knew well that under some bereavements no solace can be accepted: Madame de la Fayette had passed the age when new objects can direct our

thoughts into a new channel. All her affection, her life, her daily habits, had centred in Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld; they had been growing old together, and though her friend was past seventy, his loss came like an unexpected event. 'Her life is so arranged that she must miss him every day.' And speaking for herself Madame de Sévigné says—'Is it not strange that God has again deprived me of the satisfaction of speaking of your interests with Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, in which he appeared obligingly occupied? So that, having lost Monsieur de Pomponne, I have no longer the pleasure of thinking that I can ever be of the slightest service to you.'

That want of power was never more bitterly felt by Madame de Sévigné, for it was with a kind of terror she saw her life speeding away, and her days passed far from her daughter. 'For me, my child,' says she, 'I think of nothing but seeing you again, and the more the death of Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld makes me reflect on mine, the more I desire to spend the rest of my life with you.'

One person alone, as Madame de Sévigné often repeated, was to remain inconsolable at the death of Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld; the others who had first keenly felt it were gradually called away by their duty or their pleasures. The Prince de Marsillac, now Duc de la Rochefoucauld, had returned to his post.

He was Grand Veneur, and all those for whom the court was the object of unwearied occupation were now solely engaged with the newly arrived dauphine. The king was eager to know the truth as to the personal appearance of the princesse, and the faithful report was that he must reserve the first impression. All that could be found in her worthy of eulogy was loudly proclaimed; but the defects of her face could not be palliated. Still, when seen she produced a favourable impression. It was regarded such a boon to be permitted to hope that a princess whose rank would enable her to exercise so great an influence, would be something more than the pious and short-witted infanta who was the queen of Louis XIV, that she was hailed with delight. 'One hears sound praise of Madame la Dauphine; she is, in a word, somebody. She has a solid and brilliant intelligence; her manners are quite charming and quite French. She is as much accustomed to the court as if she had been born there; she has sentiments of her own, and does not accept those that are presented to her. "Madame, do you not wish to play?" "No, I do not like playing." "But you will go out hunting?" "*Not at all; I do* not understand that pleasure." But what does she do then? She is extremely fond of conversation, of reading, of working, driving; her great desire is to please the king. His majesty passes several hours in

her room, and none in that of Madame de Montespan. This makes a very secluded court, for while the princesse has such good company no one is allowed to see her. There is a *cercle* during one hour in the day. She will not be seen either at her toilet or at her *coucher*. The favour of the person with a cold [Madame de Maintenon], as you termed her this winter, increases every day, as well as the hatred between her and the sister of him who received you so well [Vivonne, brother of Madame de Montespan]."

Madame de Coulanges, who had been the friend of Madame de Maintenon when she lived in the Rue des Tournelles as Madame Scarron, continued her intimacy when she had her abode in palaces: it was through her, as we have said, that Madame de Sévigné learnt many of those small details which diverted Madame de Grignan, and which also amuse posterity. Of the dauphine, Madame de Sévigné was soon to judge herself. She had been pressed before to pay her court to the princesse, but she felt in no hurry. The Duchesse de Chaulnes, however, would take no further denial, and the marquise found herself, as she describes—'In the midst of all the court. . . . I saw Madame la Dauphine, whose ugliness is not at all striking or disagreeable. Her face is unbecoming, but her wit becomes her perfectly: every gesture she makes, every word she utters, convinces us that she has a

great deal of it. Her eyes are quick and penetrating, she apprehends and easily understands everything; she is natural, and no more embarrassed than if she had been born in the Louvre. . . . She has a very noble mien, and much dignity and gentleness. . . . She is surprised at people troubling themselves so much about amusements. . . . Mesdames de Richelieu, Rochefort, and Maintenon paid me a great many compliments, and mentioned you. Madame de Maintenon by chance paid me a little visit of a quarter of an hour, and gave me many details about Madame la Dauphine. She spoke again about your health, of your capacity, and the sympathy you have for each other, with as much interest as in the Rue des Tournelles.'

However gratifying all this was to her maternal pride, Madame de Sévigné had passed the time of life in which she could derive any pleasure from the momentary smile of a princess. It was her son, it was Monsieur de Grignan and his wife, she wished to see established in that court; though perhaps in those moments, when she had a nearer view of intrigues, the disappointments, the jealousies, that rent the inward heart of the most favoured, she could better understand and tolerate the desire of Sévigné to be no longer 'attached like the wolf.' We are but expressing a presumption; for, on the contrary, Madame de

Sévigné speaks of her renewed efforts to shake the decision of her son.

The distinction Madame de Coulanges enjoyed at court owing to the merit of her wit, caused Madame de Sévigné to say, in allusion to her daughter, whose parts she thought equal to any—'If true merit, joined to wit, had its place, without flattering yourself you would have reason to believe that your proper place would be in those elevated regions.'

Madame de Sévigné mused often on that singular destiny which prompted her ever to anticipate the course of Time—violating by that desire the instincts of her very nature. She who could not look at the moving hand of a clock without reflecting to what end each passing hour was hurrying her, found herself as it were compelled to pray that the months, nay, the years, might glide by rapidly. Hope made her regard the future 'as a dark night, which, when we least expect it, may break into sudden day.'

Any plans for Madame de Grignan, any hope founded on the favours granted to the two cadets of her house, must be adjourned till the coming winter, when Madame de Grignan had promised to return to Paris. Of this engagement her mother reminds her:—'I must persuade myself that you will keep the promise you made me to come and see me this winter, therefore I try to believe that half the time we have

to be separated is already past.' Those intervening months Madame de Sévigné was to spend at the Rochers, and it was with dread she looked forward to her journey. 'I am hastening to Brittany with an insurmountable reluctance: I start for many reasons; first, to be on my way there; then to be there awhile; thirdly, to have been there; and, above all, in order that there may be no further question about this journey. After the loss of health, to which I always give the first place, nothing is so deplorable as the dilapidated state of our affairs. I yield therefore to these cruel reasons.' Madame de Sévigné could never voluntarily increase the distance that separated her from Madame de Grignan without experiencing a renewal of the first grief of separation. 'I do not tell you the sorrow this second adieu causes me.'

The bad weather—the month of May beginning with all the rigours of winter—deferred for a few days longer the intended departure of Madame de Sévigné. She could therefore still fill her letters with the news of the court; the ever-rising and surer favour of Madame de Maintenon, and the gifts Fortune, under the guise of Jupiter (the king), lavished on Mademoiselle de Fontanges. 'Mademoiselle de Fontanges is a duchesse, with an income of twenty thousand écus. She to-day received congratulations while in bed.' The fair young creature

thus being elevated to a distinction abounding more in honours than honour, was attacked nearly at the same moment with that illness that cut short her career. But neglect came even before death. Let her triumph a few short hours longer, and muse on the destiny of another fragile beauty, who, after twenty-seven years of austere penance, expired in the fear and love of God. Madame de Longueville died in the same year as Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld, an interval of a few weeks only separating the dates of their decease.

'Monsieur d'Autun pronounced yesterday at the Carmélites the orasion funèbre over Madame de Longueville,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'and did it with all the capacity, grace, and ability imaginable. . . . He divided his discourse into two parts, equally fine. He spoke of her beauty, and of all her past wars in an inimitable manner: and as to the second part, you can easily judge that a penance of twenty-seven years was a fine subject to discourse upon. . . . Monsieur le Prince and Monsieur le Duc offered a great many civilities to all who composed the assembly. . . . I had just left Mesdemoiselles de la Rochefoucauld at the Carmélites; they had been mourning over their father; the eldest in particular has shown herself with Monsieur de Marsillac. It was there, at the oraison funèbre of Madame de Longueville, that those

daughters cried over Monsieur de Rochefoucauld ; they have both died in the same year. There is a great deal to meditate upon over those two names.'

The dreaded moment had arrived ; no further pretext could delay Madame de Sévigné's journey to Brittany. 'I am going, like a fury, to be paid. I am determined not to listen to any excuses. It is a singular thing what a quantity of money is owing to me. I shall be always saying, like the Avare, "Money, money!"' And so the good wishes and adieus were spoken. Her friends, the friends of her daughter, young and old, all did wonders ; but distinguishing herself above all others was, as usual, Madame de Coulanges, who, under her frivolous manner, concealed a warmer feeling than did Madame de Grignan with all her reason and her wisdom.

CHAPTER VI.

1680.

Madame de Sévigné's journey to Nantes.—Pleasure in finding her daughter's letters.—Visit to the Buron.—Arrival at the Rochers.—Madame de Sévigné finds pleasure in her books and woods.—Letters from Madame de Coulanges.—Madame de Maintenon's present to the Dauphine.—Sévigné at Fontainebleau.—Reflections.—Solitude of the Rochers.—Faults of Madame de Grignan.—Forced liberality of Madame de Sévigné.—Difference of Madame de Sévigné's sentiments for her son and daughter.—Arrival of the Princesse de Tarente at Vitré.—Madame de Sévigné's remarks on style and false appearance.

MADAME DE GRIGNAN wrote word to her mother, that if the human heart were left alone it would be sure to discover its own consolation. Madame de Sévigné found her solace on this occasion in the splendid weather and the beautiful roads, but more particularly in the society of her son, who accompanied her as far as Orleans. Her heart was sad, and it needed the cheering influence of Sévigné to dispel its gloom. Only a day before leaving Paris she had exclaimed in discouragement—'I assure you that I have great need of you all; I am no longer interested in either music or pleasures. It is in vain I stamp the ground with

my foot; nothing rises but a life sad and monotonous.'

In spite of her reluctance to start, it was a necessary change, a charming diversion to be travelling; the little incidents of the journey affording much amusement to Madame de Sévigné. On the first day she was diverted by the conversation of a country gentleman who rendered them some assistance when a trifling accident happened to their carriage, and she could not refrain from making reflections on the perfect contentment of a man who was satisfied beyond his desires in his small sphere. These meditations she further indulged in when she embarked on the Loire.

Sévigné had returned to Paris from Orleans, regretting that he was unable to accompany his mother to Brittany. She and the good abbé continued their journey alone. It was an easy and tranquil mode of travelling, that which they adopted, and Madame de Sévigné describes it graphically to her daughter:—'We came on board the boat at six o'clock, the weather being the finest conceivable. I had had the body of my great *carrosse* placed in it in such a manner that the sun cannot enter. We have lowered the glasses, and the opening in front makes a marvellous picture, the doors and small side windows affording us every prospect that can be imagined. Only the abbé and I are in this pretty room, seated at our ease on good

cushions, and enjoying plenty of air; all the rest like pigs on straw. . . . If you ask me what I do in this charming *carrosse*, where I am not frightened, I think of my dear daughter, and I entertain myself with the tender affection I have for her, and that she has for me.'

From Blois, where Madame de Sévigné wrote this letter, she went to Tours, arriving there after an equally delightful day; twelve hours in her improvised cabin were quickly spent when occupied with viewing the beauty of the banks, reading, and above all in thinking of Madame de Grignan. The good abbé was charmed with this mode of travelling, and his niece was only too happy to be thus able to afford him some compensation for the fatigue he, at the age of seventy-three, was enduring for her sake. Still Madame de Sévigné's disposition needed too much a community of mind suited to hers to be quite contented with her only companion. 'It is a pity we are not a little less solitary,' she says; and then quickly, as if fearful of giving any anxiety to Madame de Grignan, she adds:—'But I assure you that I wish for no one; and being condemned to increase the distance between us, I prefer to be alone and at liberty, and to devote myself entirely to my affairs, rather than be disturbed without being satisfied.'

Madame de Sévigné had no intention of going direct

to the Rochers; she was first to visit Nantes, where the settlement of some business required her presence. She arrived there on the 13th of May, 1680, five days after leaving Paris. There she was received in the house of Monsieur d'Harouys, who gave her his usual affectionate and hospitable welcome. Another welcome gladly received was that contained in the letters of Madame de Grignan that were awaiting her. She read them with delight increased by the short privation of them she had been undergoing. In those letters she found references to all the subjects she had most at heart—the future journey of Madame de Grignan; her departure of the preceding year, and the motives that had determined it; while under those put forward by Madame de Grignan she discovered with some little jealousy, which she concealed from her daughter, that it was Monsieur de Grignan, and no one else, who was the cause of his wife braving a journey so perilous to her health.

Madame de Sévigné, transplanted suddenly from Paris to the dullness of a provincial town, experienced a weariness she never felt at the Rochers. She longed only to be in her woods, and not 'in the false representation of a society that had nothing agreeable' to her. There was also the fatigue of going over the accounts for nineteen years, and it was not easy to arrive at a settlement with people who tried by every means to

avoid payment. Forced to be rigorous and to exact her due, Madame de Sévigné was too gentle to do so without regret. 'What annoys me,' writes she, 'is to be compelled to do harm; but when I play at drowning, and I ask myself which is to be drowned, Monsieur de la Jarie* or I, without hesitation I say Monsieur de la Jarie, and that gives me courage.

The good abbé no doubt was more determined, and saw nothing but the interest and necessities of his niece. The 'Buron,' an estate belonging to Madame de Sévigné, was near to Nantes; and from a visit there she returned in despair at the destruction her son had caused during his last journey to Brittany. 'I was yesterday at the Buron, and returned at night. I thought I must have cried on seeing the damage done to this estate. It possessed the oldest trees in the world; and my son during his last journey had them felled. He also sold a little cluster which was truly beautiful. All this is pitiable. He obtained for this four hundred pistoles, of which he had not a sou remaining a month after. It is impossible to understand what he has done, nor what his stay in Brittany cost him, for he was as one penniless, having sent back his footmen and his coachman to Paris, and he had no one but Larchemin with him in this town, where he remained two months. He has found out how to spend

* Her farmer at the Buron.

without keeping up an appearance, how to lose without gambling, and how to pay without getting out of debt; always a thirst for and a want of money in peace as in war. It is an abyss, but of what kind I know not, for he has not a single fancy, but his hand is a crucible in which gold melts. My child, you must endure all this. All those afflicted dryads I saw yesterday, all those venerable sylvans who no longer know where to find shelter, all those old crows established for two centuries in the depth of those woods, those screech-owls, who from their obscurity announced by their mournful cries the misfortune of all men—all that I saw yesterday moved me and sensibly touched my heart; and who knows that some of those old oaks have not spoken, as did the one in which Clorinde was confined?'

After this visit, from which she had returned so depressed, Madame de Sévigné started for the Rochers. At Rennes, the Marquise de Marbeuf, one of her best Breton friends, did all she could to detain her more than one night, and failing in this, she gave her a breakfast on the morning of her departure, when the governor and all the persons of mark in the town came to pay their respects to Madame de Sévigné. All agreed in telling her that she was leaving too early, that the roads were 'like this room, for,' remarks the marquise, 'that is always the comparison. They were so much

"like this room," that we did not arrive here [the Rochers] till after midnight, and always in water, from Vitré here, where I have been a thousand times. We could not even see the way; all the foot-ways have become impassable, the ruts deeper. . . . Finally, finding that we could see nothing, and that we were obliged to feel the ground, we sent to ask help of Pilois: he arrived with a dozen lads; some held us, others lighted us with wisps of straw, and all spoke such broad Breton that we were dying of laughter. . . . This morning we find ourselves at the Rochers, but as yet ill at ease and comfortless.'

It was not long, however, before Madame de Sévigné made herself more and more at home in her château. She traversed her alleys with her good friend Pilois, and she tells Madame de Grignan proudly that there are more than ten she has never seen. Soon also the interior of the mansion assumed a more habitable appearance; Madame de Sévigné in person taking pleasure in arranging the books she had brought with her. 'You cannot put your hand on one,' says she 'without wishing to read it through. The whole of one shelf for devotional books, and what a devotion! What an encouragement to honour our religion! Another is entirely for admirable histories; another for "Morales," another for poetry, and for tales and memoirs. Romances are despised, and have found

their way to the cupboards. When I enter this room, I do not understand why I ever leave it; it would be worthy of you, my daughter,'—and then she adds—'but our society would be very unworthy.'

Already, so soon after her arrival, the poor Mademoiselle du Plessis is ridiculed. She had not improved during those years of Madame de Sévigné's absence, and she also had not changed towards Madame de Sévigné, who, however, rejoices that she can hear her talk for any length of time without listening to a single word.

It was an abrupt transition from the polite circle of select friends in Paris to the foolish familiarity of Mademoiselle du Plessis; the letters from Paris are therefore hailed with pleasure, and those of Madame de Coulanges, filled with 'a thousand nothings,' are not the least acceptable. She writes to Madame de Sévigné, who in turn informs her daughter, that the favour of her friend (Madame de Maintenon) is always increasing. In spite of the complaints of the queen, who accused her of all the coldness there was between herself and her daughter-in-law, we know Madame de Maintenon was dame d'atour to the dauphine, and therefore might be supposed to influence her; but if she displeased the queen, she knew better how to propitiate the goodwill of the dauphin, for having lost some wager to him, she presented him

with a stick, of which a description is given by Madame de Sévigné. It had been made to the order of Madame de Coulanges, and the correctness of the details is beyond doubt:—'The head is a pomegranate of gold and rubies; the top opens, and discloses the portrait of Madame la Dauphine, by Pétitot, and beneath it, "Il più grato nasconde,"* . . . and it is true as to this princesse.'

Sévigné also could inform his mother of all that happened at court. He was at Fontainebleau, whence he wrote to the Rochers descriptions of the amusements going on there. Madame de Sévigné profited by them to remind him of all the advantages of the position he filled, and contrasted it with what he desired to exchange it for. 'I write to my son,' says she to Madame de Grignan, 'that it is a great pleasure to be obliged to be there [at court], to have a master, a place, a countenance; that, for myself, if I had had one, I should have liked that country extremely; that it is only through not having one that I have abandoned it; that this sort of contempt was a regret, that I avenge myself by abusing it, like Montaigne did youth; and that I wondered that he preferred afternoons like mine spent between Mademoiselle du Plessis and Mademoiselle de Launaie, to being in the midst of all that is good and handsome. What I say

* What she has most agreeable she conceals.

for myself, my dearest, truly I say it for you; do not believe that if Monsieur de Grignan and you were situated as you deserve to be, you would not suit yourself perfectly to that mode of life; but Providence does not allow that you should have other greatness than that you already possess. For myself, I have seen moments when nothing but good fortune was wanted to place me in the most agreeable position in the world, when all of a sudden came prisons and banishments. Do you think that my destiny has been very happy? I am satisfied with it nevertheless, and if I sometimes murmur, it is not in regard to myself.'

No, indeed, destiny had not given to Madame de Sévigné those blessings she seemed to deserve better than anyone. How many unsatisfied desires must have lived and died in her heart! and now that strife and hope were alike over, now that she could look back and contemplate so many years of a bright youth spent at a solitary hearth, she neither repined nor murmured; she accepted the lot that had been hers, consoled by the testimony of her conscience; she had nothing to regret, and she did not repine. It was for those dear children, for whom she had devoted her life, that she murmured; the impatience she had never experienced for herself, she felt for them. The more we get acquainted with Madame de Sévigné's nature

(and it seems to us it is hardly possible to have a closer intimacy with the feelings of one who can no longer speak than we have with hers), the more we admire and venerate her. We judge of virtue, not by negative qualities, but by the force of temptations vanquished. There are those for whom the abstinence from every frailty (we will not say the exercise of every virtue) is without merit, because it is without effort; those are, perhaps, the most happy whose aspirations never go further than the limits of their daily path—whom love, the world, its pomps, its delightful vanities, its hollow but gilded favours, tempt not, because they see nothing in them. There is no self-denial in refusing the most savoury dish if it is unpalatable; but there is when it is appreciated.

Such was Madame de Sévigné's nature, that it is impossible to think anyone was ever better disposed than she was to taste all the sweetness of loving and being beloved, and basking joyfully in all the gaudy amusements of a court. It was a slippery road had she allowed herself to enter upon it, but she did not. With one glance she measured the good of the present hour and the evil of the future. She mastered every inclination, and clinging with a tight grasp to the pure and smiling image of a spotless life, she threaded her path between her children, who, like the invisible guardian angels a pious tradition places at the side of

our little ones, defended her from all evil, and saved her from every temptation.

The life at the Rochers was unusually quiet and solitary; the greatest amusement of Madame de Sévigné, and that also of the Bien Bon, was in superintending their workmen; both indulged their taste for building and improving, and though in Brittany it cost little, Madame de Sévigné remarks, with perfect good sense—'It would cost still less if we kept quiet.' The woods were always her delight; she spent many hours there with her stick and her maid Louison. She says she wanted nothing more, because in truth she had enough to occupy her thoughts. It was always the same subject that filled them; that one of which she was never weary. We fancy it must have been returning from one of those solitary walks, when she had been magnifying to herself all the good qualities of Madame de Grignan, and leaving in oblivion all her faults, that she wrote the following letter:—'Is there anyone in the world more enlightened, and more penetrated with reason and with your duties than you are? You know full well that you are above others; you have wisdom, judgment, discernment; uncertainty, because you are too enlightened; cleverness, insinuation, purpose, when you will; prudence, firmness, presence of mind, eloquence, and the gift of being loved when you desire it, and sometimes a great

deal more than you desire. Paper is not wanting, nor the materials to fill it; but to say all in a word, you have in you all that is requisite to be whatever you aspire to. There are some people in whom the stuff is wanting. . . . My child, do not complain.'

Putting on one side the fond adoration which made the qualities of Madame de Grignan appear of such importance in her mother's eyes, it is impossible to deny that she did possess nearly all those good gifts Madame de Sévigné speaks of. It was the want of other qualities—of openness, of unselfishness, of a warm heart, of diffidence, that hindered one so richly endowed from being either amiable, or, with but few exceptions, beloved by others. We feel certain every impulse in all whom she met must have been checked by the presence of Madame de Grignan, whilst that of Madame de Sévigné only encouraged and attached. Yet Madame de Sévigné, repulsed as she herself often had been by the cold demeanour of her daughter, always turned to her as the centre of her life. 'All the rest passes, all glides by, all is above or on one side, and leaves but slight traces in my mind.'

The marquise either spent her days in such fond meditations, or was occupied in exercising, rather against her wish, an extravagant liberality which she describes thus:—'It is true, that since I have arrived here, I have been giving away rather large sums; one

morning eight hundred francs; another, a thousand; another, five thousand; another day, three hundred écus. It seems I am joking; but it is a too positive fact. I find farmers and millers who owe me those sums, and who have not a single sou to pay them, so I am compelled to give it them. I do not pretend to great merit, for, as you see, it is necessity.' From such employment, Madame de Sévigné's thoughts turned gladly to the Château de Grignan, which she knew to be filled with visitors, where music was heard, and brilliant assemblies gathered. To Madame de Grignan all this was a weariness, at least her mother, who trusted to her every word, thought so. Our opinion is that she was mistaken; believing it, however, and reflecting on her own sociable disposition, she says:—'To see our establishments and our inclinations, it would appear destiny had made a quid pro quo.'

Monsieur de Coulanges was on his way to Grignan, to behold its comtesse in all her glory. How Madame de Sévigné envied him, and wished she too might go and join the good company that was staying with her daughter! 'You have such splendid fare,' she writes, 'such good music, such a charming little room, that in the fine season it is not a solitude, but an agreeable republic.'

If Madame de Sévigné often tried to repress the

excess of magnificence going on at Grignan, and warned her children of their coming embarrassments, she had now a different task with her son. He was at Fontainebleau, and though, to use the expression of his mother, 'his hand was a crucible in which gold melts,' he did not at court make that show his rank and name demanded. 'As to my son,' writes the marquise with regret, 'one always believes he never had a sou. He gives nothing; never a repast; never a present; has not a horse to follow the king and Monsieur le Dauphin out hunting; and yet if you knew the sums that pass through his hands you would be astonished.'

The debts of the Grignans might be excused by the princely state they had been keeping up for years, but Sévigné's could not be justified, because no one reaped benefit from his extravagance. This was pain to Madame de Sévigné, the greater because she had always striven to maintain strict order in her affairs, and she saw clearly to what all this waste was leading her son. The hour had not yet come when, altered and amended, Sévigné was to lead a serious and quiet life in those very Rochers where he had been born.

Let us here notice a slight particularity which strikes us as perfectly illustrating the contrasting natures of Madame de Sévigné's two children. Her

son she can never blame but when he is absent; when near, all his endearing qualities, his pleasant humour, his considerate conduct, made her, on the instant he embraced her, forgive him all the grief he may before have occasioned. With Madame de Grignan it is the opposite: absence made her become the living fancy of a dream, while reality brought home painfully every asperity of heart and temper. Discussions were frequent between mother and daughter. We have evidence that when together Madame de Sévigné suffered more than she wished to own; then, as months glided on, all this is forgotten, and nothing but praise and words of affection are spoken.

The Princesse de Tarente, the friend and neighbour of our marquise, arrived at Vitré in the beginning of July, 1680. This was a real pleasure to Madame de Sévigné, who found her society more congenial than that with which she was surrounded. The Princesse de Tarente knew the court, knew Paris; there was some one equally curious with herself in watching from afar the strange and increasing ascendency of Madame de Maintenon, and who felt an interest in the forsaken Madame de Fontanges. Those who have read St.-Simon are familiar with his description of the high chair of Madame de Maintenon. The strange sight witnessed so often by that generation to which younger people than Madame de

Sévigné belonged, is hinted at in the correspondence of that year from the Rochers:—'The conversations of the king with Madame de Maintenon do nothing but increase; they last from six till ten. The daughter-in-law [the dauphine] goes in sometimes to pay a short visit, and finds them each seated in high chairs. After she has left, the conversation is renewed. My friend [Madame de Coulanges] tells me that the lady is now only approached with fear and respect, and that the ministers render her the court that others make them.'

And so, while the widow of Scarron assumed the attitude of a queen, Madame de Montespan, younger and handsomer, cried bitter tears of humiliation, and Madame de Fontanges, dying and broken-hearted, repaired to a convent there to end her short existence. 'She [Madame de Fontanges] was in a carriage with eight horses,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'and her sisters with her; but all were so sad that they inspired compassion. The fair one, pale, altered, overcome with sadness; despising an income of forty thousand écus and a *tabouret* which she has, and wishing for health and the heart of the king, which she has not. . . . I do not think there is another example of such a fortunate and unfortunate person.'

It was strange, as Madame de Sévigné herself remarked, that, being at the Rochers, she should fill

her letters with news of the court; but she had many correspondents desirous to keep her informed of all that was passing. Madame de Vins wrote also, and though she was not placed, like Madame de Coulanges, where she could know all that was going on, her letters greatly pleased Madame de Sévigné. She found in their style the exact image of the amiable person who wrote them; and upon this subject she insists how often it is that style gives an incorrect idea of the writer. 'It is true,' says she, 'there are people whose style resèmbles them so little that it is impossible to know them. When I. read D'Hacqueville I always believed him to be affection and gentleness personified; when one saw him, this was so entirely hidden under the rigidness of his reason and the severity of his manner, that he was another man. As to Madame de Vins, it is herself.'

Madame de Sévigné, whose style was evidently the very incarnation of her person, did not like in others those differences, which struck her somewhat as a false pretence. All in her was of so solid a worth, that she experienced disappointment when pleasing appearances did not keep the promise they made. It is amusing to see her feelings on this point when a young man was presented to her who was 'handsome, young, fair, . . . with a noble presence, for which I hunger. I was delighted with this figure; but, alas!

as soon as he opened his mouth he began to laugh at every word he said, and I well-nigh to cry.'

We have before remarked on the satisfaction that Madame de Sévigné experienced in praising. She saw good wherever it might be discovered, and if in the depth of her province she met with avarice and vices rendered worse by the narrow field in which they moved, she exclaims also with delight and pride —pride for that humanity to which she belonged :— 'I find the souls of some peasants straighter than lines, and that they love virtue as naturally as horses trot.'

CHAPTER VII.

1680.

Monsieur and Madame de Grignan's admiration for one of Madame de Sévigné's letters.—Visit of the Princesse de Tarente and Madame de Sévigné to Rennes.—Their reception there.—Partiality of Madame de Sévigné for the game of chess.—Her observations on jealousy.—Return to the Rochers.—Bussy's philosophy.—Thoughts on death.—Financial embarrassments of the Grignans.—Intercession of Madame de Sévigné in favour of Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar.—Feelings of Madame de Sévigné on receipt of an assurance of her daughter's visit to Paris.—Departure from the Rochers.—Madame de Sévigné's happy expectation is damped by the philosophy of Madame de Grignan.—The Chevalier de Grignan and Mademoiselle de Méri at the Hôtel de Carnavalet.—Passionate affection of Madame de Sévigné.

MADAME DE GRIGNAN derived from the letters of her mother all the pleasure imaginable, and Monsieur de Grignan shared her admiration for those effusions of a heart and mind of so rare a merit. It was gratifying to the marquise to see that the pains she took to amuse or interest her daughter were fully appreciated. It is in the letters written to Madame de Grignan that we find most profusely scattered the happiest images and the most striking periods.

Madame de Sévigné is speaking to one who understands her, to please whom is her aim, and this slight emulation calls forth in its greatest force all the magic of her style.

About the time we are now speaking of, the marquise had written to Provence a letter, which struck the Grignans as so admirable both in thought and expression, that they proposed to send it back to her that she might judge of its merit. It is in truth a delineation of the human heart, such as the greatest philosophers might take pride in. The event that called forth this letter is sufficiently explained in the words of Madame de Sévigné as not to require any further comment. Posterity is indifferent to the passion of La Fare for Madame de la Sablière, but what is not without interest, is the delineation which Madame de Sévigné gives of its decline :—

'You ask me what has caused that interruption to continuity between La Fare and Madame de la Sablière : it is bassette [a game at cards]; would you have believed it? It is for that shameless bassette that he has abandoned such a religious adoration. In truth, the moment had arrived when his passion must have come to an end and transferred itself to another object. Would it be imagined that bassette could be the road to salvation for any one? Ah, it has been truly said that there are five hundred thou-

sand roads that lead to it. Madame de la Sablière began by remarking his inattention, his desertion ; she examined his bad excuses, his insincere reasons, his pretexts, his confused justifications ; she noticed his forced conversations, his impatience to leave her house, his journeys to St.-Germain, where he played ; his weariness in her presence, when he knew not what to say. Finally, when she had well observed the eclipse that was taking place, and the foreign body that was obscuring little by little a love once so brilliant, when she had done this, she took her resolution. I do not know what effort it cost her ; I know that without a quarrel, without reproaches, without banishing him, without explanations, without wishing to confound him, she has eclipsed herself ; and without definitively abandoning her house, where she returns sometimes, without having said she renounced the world, she finds herself so contented at the Incurables, that she spends there nearly all her time, feeling with pleasure that her sufferings are not like those of the sick whom she tends. The superiors of the house are charmed with her intelligence ; she governs them all : her friends go and see her ; she is always excellent society. La Fare plays at bassette and so

"Le combat finit faute de combattants." *

* The combat ended for want of combatants.

'So ends this great affair, which attracted the attention of the world: this is the path God has marked out for this pretty woman. She at least did not say, with her arms crossed, "I am waiting for grace." Good God, how that speech wearies me! ah, on my life! grace will know full well how to prepare for you the ways, the turns, the crossways, the bassettes, the miseries, the sorrows, the misfortunes, the grandeurs; everything serves, and is put in use by that great Workman who does always infallibly all that He wishes.'

We shall not insist on Madame de Sévigné's religious sentiments as discernible in this passage; we have done so more than once, but it seems to us that her feelings are well expressed in the inscription she was at that time having engraved over the altar of her chapel at the Rochers:—

'SOLI DEO HONOR ET GLORIA.'*

It savoured too much of Jansénisme for the Grignans, but as Madame de Sévigné says, it was to avoid causing any jealousy; and then she adds:—'It does not make me stand worse with the Princesse de Tarente.' The princesse, we need hardly say, was a Protestant.

Madame de Sévigné, who frequently saw this good

* To God alone be honour and glory.

neighbour, was preparing to accompany her to Rennes, where Monsieur de Chaulnes received the aunt of MADAME with all the honours due to her. 'Monsieur le Duc de Chaulnes,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'first sent forty guards with a captain more than a league out of the town, to pay his compliment. A little further on we met Madame de Marbeuf, two presidents, friends of the Princesse de Tarente, and finally Monsieur de Chaulnes, Monsieur de Rennes, Monsieur de Coëtlogon, de Tonquedec, de Beaucé, de Kercado, de *Crapado*, de *Kenpart*, de *Kiriqiimini*; seriously a *drapello eletto* [chosen troop]. We stop; we embrace, we do not know, what we say. Drums and trumpets are heard; a crowd is there dying to cry out something.' Madame de Sévigné then adds, with satisfaction at the happy suggestion—'I proposed that we should go and rest at Madame de Chaulnes.'

They found the duchesse surrounded by more than forty ladies of rank and name. There again the embracing is resumed. 'We kissed them all, men and women. It was a strange movement: the princesse showed me the way, and I followed in admirable time.' After such an ordeal the marquise and, we do not doubt, the Princesse de Tarente also found it delightful to be able to rest themselves at the house of their friend, the Marquise de Marbeuf. A few hours' relaxation followed, when they returned to the

Duchesse de Chaulnes. 'I had made myself so fine,' says the marquise, 'that I eclipsed entirely all my daughters-in-law,' alluding to the ladies to whom Sévigné had paid marked attentions during his last journey in Brittany, 'and the honour of grandmothers was supported with dignity.'

Nothing could be more magnificent than the state held by the governors of Brittany,—'tables magnificently served, dinners, suppers, a profusion of lights, and a crowd of Bretons.' The afternoons were spent 'in games and conversation, but,' says the marquise, 'what annoyed me, was to see a pretty little woman, quite young, and who assuredly has not more intelligence than I have, twice checkmate Monsieur de Chaulnes in such a way as to make me die of envy.'

We have not yet spoken of the great partiality of Madame de Sévigné for the game of chess; she declared there was 'nothing so well calculated to humble our pride, and that game shows us the littleness and the limits of the human mind; I think it would be very useful to a person who would from it extract those reflections. But, on the other hand, that foresight, that penetration, that prudence, the good success of a wise provision, such things delight and provoke an interior satisfaction which might well feed our pride.'

It is not difficult to believe after this that Madame

de Sévigné regarded with positive admiration those who excelled in a game in which she discovered so much; but we think the pretty little woman of Rennes would have been singularly flattered had she been aware of the jealousy she inspired in Madame de Sévigné. It was not, however, the kind of jealousy the marquise in the same letter so admirably describes to her daughter. Madame de Grignan, as our readers know, had with her a lady companion of the name of Montgobert. Madame de Sévigné appreciated and liked her, and had had occasion more than once to take her part. There had been for some time past a serious misunderstanding between the haughty comtesse and her *demoiselle*. Madame de Sévigné had done her best by letters to bring her daughter to see its little importance, striving to advocate the cause of Montgobert, and yet not offend Madame de Grignan.

Mademoiselle de Montgobert thought herself neglected, and founded on this her grievances. Answering to the complaints of Madame de Grignan, the marquise says—'You may believe that I enter into all your sentiments; but I wish to teach you what is jealousy, at least by theory (credi a me pur che l'ho provato *). I wish to assure you that when jealous one often says a great many things one does not intend. And even

* Believe me who have experienced it.

if they were really experienced they would not testify to a want of affection; quite the reverse. For when we dissect speeches of this kind, full of anger and sorrow, we discover in them a great deal of genuine tenderness and attachment. There are people with a very sensitive heart joined to a narrow understanding, and such dispositions are marvellously disposed to jealousy.'

From Rennes Madame de Sévigné returned to the Rochers, where she found herself back with fresh pleasure after the wearisome amusements she had gone through. It was there she received a letter from Bussy. Their correspondence, if it flagged, never ceased, and they each testify an interest in the doings of the other.

Madame de Sévigné could not reconcile herself to Bussy's banishment from court, whilst he, on the contrary, never ceased to protest his perfect contentment in his exile. If the sincerity of these assurances was doubtful, they were nevertheless supported with reasons so full of justice and philosophy, that had Bussy practised what he preached, he might well have been deemed a happy man. 'As God has willed it,' says he, 'I like as much the tranquil and quiet life I have led these last years, as one more in view. I formerly made enough noise in the world; some make it at the beginning of their career, others at the end,

others never, and others always. All that is immaterial before death.'

It is curious to mark this coincidence of ideas between Bussy and Madame de Sévigné. Both those Rabutins had a natural horror of the thought of death; both saw in life much to enjoy; and yet both are continually making reflections on the certain end of all our efforts. It is true also that those meditations always left them both equally planning for the future, and desiring—Bussy for himself, and Madame de Sévigné for her children—the dignities and goods of this world.

Madame de Sévigné was at this time very anxious about a change she foresaw in the position in life of her daughter. Monsieur de Grignan had now been for ten years exercising the functions of Governor of Provence, in the absence of Monsieur le Duc de Vendôme. This young prince, it was announced, was preparing to take in his own hands the government the king had bestowed on him; and Madame de Grignan looked forward with grief to being obliged to yield her supreme position in the province, whilst Madame de Sévigné protested that while sharing her daughter's regrets she could think only of the possibility such a chance would give Madame de Grignan of remaining in Paris, and being spared the ruinous expenditure of her receptions at

Aix. But all speculation of this kind was premature, as Monsieur de Vendôme's intention had not yet been spoken in a positive manner.

Madame de Sévigné was right when she desired some reduction in the heavy expenses supported with so much effort by the Grignans. The comtesse herself, though loving ostentation as much as any of the proud Adhémars, did not dare to inquire into her expenditure. To Madame de Sévigné, accustomed as she was to the exact accounts of the Abbé de Coulanges, such a state of things seemed both inconceivable and deplorable, and to what her daughter had written to her on the subject she answers :—'I understand that you dare not inquire into your expenses ; it is an edifice one fears to touch lest it fall to the ground. There is some enchantment at work to support the magnificence of your château. . . . I lose myself in it, and cannot understand how all you accomplish can be *done:* it seems to me a sort of black art as incomprehensible as the professed beggary of the courtiers. They never have a sou, and yet take part in all the journeys, in all the campaigns, follow all the fashions, are at every ball, at every lottery—and, though always at their last resource, continue the same life. I was forgetting their gambling, which is an important item. . . . When the time arrives for you to go and receive Monsieur de Vendôme you will go, the expense will be incurred.

Is it necessary to make a donation, to refuse a present, to hurry on the passage of Monsieur de Louvois, to run to the coast;* is there a question as to the renewal of the old sovereignty of the Adhémars, is a band of music desired, is a picture wished for—everything is undertaken, and everything is accomplished. My child, I put all this in the number of the things which it is impossible for me to fathom.'

Madame de Sévigné knew what was hidden under all those brilliant appearances. She was aware why the poor little Marie-Blanche was consuming her young heart in the convent at Aix; why the religious enthusiasm of Mademoiselle de Grignan and her *vocation* were so much approved of. Madame de Sévigné never but with profound commiseration alluded to the child in the convent at Aix. Madame de Grignan could not conceal from her mother how 'equivocal' was the vocation of Marie-Blanche, and yet the mother was determined that she would not take her out of her convent even for a few days for fear of disturbing her thoughts. Can we conceive the sufferings of a child who at five years of age was imprisoned in a convent, but whose natural instincts were

* To the coast of Provence, where, on a false alarm of a descent of the Genoese, the Comte de Grignan had hastened, organized the defence, and assembled all the noblesse at Antibes, treating them for some weeks with extreme magnificence.

so strong that education, surroundings, and example could not wrench from her heart a yearning for another existence?

Madame de Sévigné did not dare openly to combat the fixed determination of Madame de Grignan, but she tried to suggest some amelioration in the future destiny of the little girl. She wished she could be taken away from the convent at Aix, and put with her aunt, the Abbess of Aubenas. 'She would,' says she, 'become abbesse; she would be somebody: such a position is quite fit for equivocal vocations, one can unite austerities with pleasures. . . . There are a thousand consolations to be had in an abbaye. She might sometimes with her aunt visit her paternal home; she might go to watering-places; she would be the niece of Madame.'

Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar was ten years old at this time. What could have been the reflections of that young mind, seeing herself thus deliberately put on one side? But Madame de Grignan had nothing tender or gentle in her nature, while Madame de Sévigné, lacking power to change the destiny of her grandchild, was at least full of compassion. The mother could go for a religious retreat of a few days to the convent where was secluded her first-born daughter, and yet not even mention having seen her. Madame de Sévigné inquires of Madame de Grignan with a

heart evidently moved, if she had not allowed her little daughter to profit by her presence in the convent, and whether she was not admitted to a corner in the room to look at her mother; and then at different intervals comes the same entreaty—'Good bye, my beloved; kiss the little D'Adhémar, the poor child; have compassion on her: I cannot yet write to her.' And then again, some months after—'I must think of my little D'Adhémar, the poor child; how I pity her being jealous! have mercy on her, my daughter; I am moved by it.'

If this little daughter of the house of Grignan was entirely sacrificed by her relations, Mademoiselle de Grignan, the eldest of Monsieur de Grignan's children, and born of his first marriage with Angélique d'Angennes, daughter of the Marquise de Rambouillet, proved by her future conduct that her religious sentiments were due to purer motives. Still it is impossible to regard the feelings of Madame de Grignan about this *vocation* as disinterested. The step Mademoiselle de Grignan, under her influence, took a few years later, proved that her mother-in-law had worked with more cleverness than delicacy on her disposition to renounce the world. As yet there was no question as to a decisive step, but all the family joined in admiring Mademoiselle de Grignan and her pious aspirations.

The arrival of Sévigné at the Rochers, in the end of August, 1680, changed for a while the train of Madame de Sévigné's thoughts. When her son was with her she could better afford not to be exclusively occupied with what was going on in Provence. Sévigné, we have seen before, earned his pardon by his presence, and the solitary life of the Rochers was soon indebted to him for a new aspect. 'My son animates everything. The good princesse is always on the road between here and Vitré, and you may imagine we return all her visits.'

At the Rochers were now card tables at which Monsieur du Plessis, the princesse, and Madame de Sévigné played. 'This makes up a society,' says she. But no company while at the Rochers could diminish the pleasure she found in her solitary woods. The Solitaire was her favourite walk; there she could muse in peace, and evoke for the hundredth time those bright visions, most of which were doomed never to be realized.

Madame de Sévigné writes to her daughter that her father, the Baron de Chantal, was in the habit of saying that 'he loved God when he was satisfied;' and she adds—'I feel that I am his daughter.' Such being her sentiments, her love of God must have become very great when she received the joyful tidings that any doubts as to the journey of Madame de

Grignan were at an end, and that she would assuredly be in Paris for the winter. Madame de Sévigné's delight was extreme: she had been for some months living in painful uncertainty, and the happy termination of her fears filled her heart with joy. 'I never could have believed,' says she, 'that a letter in which you announce to me that you will come to Paris this winter, and that I shall see you, could make me cry. Yet it is the effect this assurance had on me. . . . No, it is not always for grief that we weep, there enters more than one sentiment into the composition of our tears.'

The certainty of possessing Madame de Grignan during the coming winter, and seeing her settled for a longer period at the Hôtel de Carnavalet, gave back to the marquise her natural cheerfulness. She could listen (she herself tells us that she knew well how to practise that difficult art:—'You know how well I listen,' writes she to her daughter)—she could listen then, and take her part in the conversations of those around her without effort and without restraint. The visitors had become more numerous at the Rochers; some of them men of wit and intelligence: Madame de Sévigné names as such to Madame de Grignan, Monsieur de Montmoron, Le Père Damaie, her son, and, as she adds, 'the letters of Corbinelli.' All *four* discussed, conversed, and diverted Madame de Sévigné

extremely. Another visitor, a young woman from Vitré, loved cards so much, that while she remained at the Rochers, they did not cease to play. After her came Madame de Marbeuf; and so from one occupation to another, from reading grave and good books, from musing in the Solitaire, and playing hombre sometimes, the weeks and months glided on; not however without bringing a new care to Madame de Sévigné in a serious illness of her son. It was this which caused her for his sake to hasten her departure from the Rochers. She started suddenly on the 21st of October, wholly occupied with taking her 'poor boy' safely to Paris. The journey was accomplished rapidly and without accident, for on the 30th of the same month the first letter from Paris is written to Madame de Grignan.

With what pleasure did the marquise prepare herself to receive her daughter! She was wholly taken up with the joy of their meeting, and could not bear that before her arrival Madame de Grignan should be thinking of again returning to Provence, and of their future separation. 'You are such a philosopher, my dear child,' she writes, 'that it is impossible to rejoice with you. You anticipate all our hopes, and you pass over the meeting we desire to look forward to a separation. We must enjoy better the benefits Providence reserves for us. After having thus reproached you, I must

confess to you that I deserve it as much myself, and that no one can be more terrified than I am at the rapidity of time, or feel more beforehand the sorrows that ordinarily follow pleasures. Alas, my daughter, this is life! ever mixed with good and evil. When we have what we desire, we are nearer to the time of losing it; when we are separated, we think only of meeting again. We must strive, then, to accept things as God sends them. For myself I am determined for the present to feel only the happiness the hope of seeing you gives me.'

Whatever Madame de Sévigné said she could not experience without alloy the happiness she believed in store for her. Her reasons were very different from those of her daughter, she expresses them in terms which must come home with striking truth to many hearts that have felt the same. It is as it were the apprehension of joy. Those who have been often disappointed, if for once they find their hopes fulfilled, are disposed to look around with awe to see if some new misfortune is not awaiting them. Madame de Sévigné possessed that superstition: she feared a joy without cloud, and she was only reassured when some check allowed her to hope that no other would befall her. 'The reflections you make,' writes she to Madame de Grignan, 'on the everlasting frustration of our plans, are most reasonable; and for me, they form my

most habitual meditation to such an extent, that I console myself for the anxieties which are marring the joy of having you soon in Paris, by the fear that some sudden accident would befall me if my satisfaction were entirely pure and cloudless.'

On arriving in Paris Madame de Sévigné found the Chevalier de Grignan and Mademoiselle de Méri occupying the Hôtel de Carnavalet, both having been staying there during her absence. The chevalier and Madame de Sévigné together examined the apartment of Madame de Grignan, which had been improved and altered during her absence. Madame de Sévigné would have been pleased to see her daughter accompanied by both her children; but Pauline remained behind, and the marquis only was privileged to accompany his mother.

Madame de Sévigné had always liked and appreciated the Chevalier de Grignan, perhaps because he liked and appreciated his sister-in-law. It was therefore a pleasure for her to have him in the house; and the only regret of the marquise was that he could not remain. Mademoiselle de Méri, on the other hand, had not those qualities which rendered her an agreeable companion. It appears, however, that Madame de Sévigné, by her kind and considerate conduct did, succeed in smoothing down the asperities of her cousin's temper. How was it possible to resist

one so gentle and so desirous to conciliate? 'She [Mademoiselle de Méri] is much better than she was,' writes the marquise to Madame de Grignan; 'she talks; she is capable of listening; we converse a great deal every evening. Ah, my child, how easy it is to live with me! how a little gentleness, a little companionship, a little confidence, even superficial—how far all this leads me! I believe in truth that no one has more facility than I have in the intercourse of life. I wish you could see how well everything goes when Mademoiselle de Méri wishes it. . . . But when we can never say anything that is not harshly contradicted, when we imagine we have used the most pleasant form of speech, and yet it is never the right one, when we find all doors closed on every subject we could entertain; when things known to all are turned into a mystery, when averred facts are regarded as calumnies, when distrust, bitterness, aversion are visible and are mixed with every word, such things wound the heart, and, frankly, they displease a little. One is not accustomed to those rugged paths, and were it only for having given you life, one would have a right to hope for more gentle treatment. Yet, my daughter, I have often experienced those unseemly manners, and what makes me speak of them is, that all is now altered, and that I feel the sweetness of the change. If this improvement could last, I assure you

it would afford me great joy; I say great; you must believe me when I speak. It is not often I do.'

Madame de Sévigné, after again referring to her more amicable and open intercourse with Mademoiselle de Méri, makes it serve as the text for a gentle admonition to her daughter, to whom she clearly alludes in the following passage:—'Judge then what I should experience if you could bring things to pass so that politeness, gentleness, a trifling confidence, a desire to converse, and all that one meets with from those who know how to love, could be henceforth established between her and me.'

What a portrait is here under a transparent application made of that too much beloved daughter! How Madame de Sévigné paints her own idol; and how easy it is to conceive what were those differences which were constantly recurring when mother and daughter were together! Madame de Sévigné did perhaps love 'not wisely but too well,' but her affection was so great that it is hardly possible to understand the nature of a disposition that could inflict so much pain on a being so affectionate and devoted. We have often tried to imagine to ourselves Madame de Grignan in the best light; we have striven to justify in our mind the adoration she excited in her mother's heart; but it is impossible not to yield to the overwhelming evidence given by that fond mother herself, which,

when joined to the judgment of contemporaries, shows Madame de Grignan in anything but a favourable aspect. No sense of wrong could alter Madame de Sévigné, however; her love for her daughter was, as she says, 'mixed with her blood, and confounded with the marrow of her bones.' 'It has become myself,' exclaims she; 'I feel it as I say it.'

CHAPTER VIII.

1680–4.

Interruption in the correspondence of mother and daughter.—Renewal of the correspondence with Bussy.—Death of the Duchesse de Fontanges.—Marriage of Madame de Coligny and La Rivière.—Correspondence of Madame de Sévigné with the President de Moulceau.—Lawsuit of the Grignans.—Birth of the Duc de Bourgogne.—Visit of Madame de Sévigné to Versailles.—Madame de Sévigné's wishes for the instruction of the poor peasants.—Her predilection for serious reading.—Death of Fouquet.—Projected marriage of Mademoiselle d'Alerac and the Vicomte de Polignac.—Charles de Sévigné's intended marriage with Mademoiselle de Mauron.—Impediments created by Madame de Grignan.—Ceremony after the wedding.—Madame de Sévigné goes on a visit to her son.—Arrival at the Rochers.—Madame de Grignan's regret at her mother's absence.—Mademoiselle de Grignan leaves the Hôtel de Carnavalet.—Madame de Grignan obtains pecuniary compensation for her husband.—Life at the Rochers.—Arrival of Monsieur de Grignan in Paris.—Ambition of Madame de Grignan.

THE correspondence of Madame de Sévigné with her daughter is now interrupted for a period of four years; after which it was resumed during an absence of Madame de Sévigné at the Rochers. Madame de Grignan arrived in Paris at the end of November, 1680, and did not return to Provence until 1688. We

must not, however, anticipate. It is during these long visits of Madame de Grignan to her mother that details about Madame de Sévigné fail us most. Letters to her friends say much, but how little is there when compared with those outpourings from her pen, filled with every event, replete with reflections, and, as we have said before, a 'fountain that no drain could exhaust'? These letters, or rather the letters of Madame de Sévigné, were appreciated by her cousin Bussy at their just value. When Madame de Grignan was in Paris, he always took advantage of her presence to obtain more frequent letters from his cousin. He writes to Madame de Sévigné in the beginning of the year 1681, that he has sent the manuscript of his memoirs to the king, and that the part has reference to the years 1673 to 1675; 'the years,' says he, 'that you wrote most, and wrote best to me.'

The marquise was rather alarmed at this 'third person' introduced into their confidence. She feared that her expressions might be misunderstood, and false conclusions drawn. Bussy quiets her anxiety by assuring her that the king will admire her letters, 'and remain convinced that the name of Rabutin, which is both ours, and the ornament of our minds, form the whole of our connection.' Madame de Sévigné, once convinced of this, renewed with pleasure a correspondence in which she found much that was agreeable.

She and Bussy, by a strange coincidence, had resumed the pen at the same moment, and after a silence of several months, the first letter of each had crossed on the road. Without imparting to Bussy all the news of court, Madame de Sévigné tells him a great deal of what was passing. The thread of the narrative is not interrupted, and those personages Madame de Sévigné paints so vividly to her daughter, live also in her letters to Bussy.

In April she writes to him that the 'Belle Fontanges has gone to a convent, . . . to prepare for her voyage to eternity;' and shortly after Madame de Sévigné announces her death, adding, 'Sic transit gloria mundi.'* She was but twenty-two, that frail and fair creature, when she started 'for her voyage to eternity.' Mademoiselle de Fontanges had loved passionately the grandeurs of this world, and had been haughty in her prosperity. A contrast suggests itself naturally to Madame de Sévigné's mind; and a few months before, alluding to this, she had written—'She [Fontanges] is always languishing, but so occupied with her grandeur that we must imagine her precisely the contrary of that little violet which hid under the grass [Madame de la Vallière], and which was ashamed to be a mother, to be a duchesse; never will there be such another.'

* So passes the glory of the world.

Madame de Sévigné, who at no time despaired of seeing Bussy reinstated in the favours of the king, saw better reasons for hope when Monsieur de Luxembourg, after the harsh treatment he had received—the Bastille and banishment—came back to court to be loaded with new honours. It was a striking example, and a signal reparation: the past was to be thrown into oblivion, and the king's atonement for his former severity was to make Luxembourg captain of his guard. Following the example of their sovereign, those who had been loudest in their condemnation of the Maréchal de Luxembourg were the first to welcome him with flattery. Such a circumstance had nothing surprising in it to Bussy or Madame de Sévigné; as to Bussy, he would have been but too glad to have provoked a similar inconsistency.

At the time we are writing of, Bussy's daughter, 'the happy widow,' Madame de Coligny, came before the world in a scandalous and, to the proud Rabutin, most humiliating fashion. The case was this: Madame de Coligny had fallen violently in love with a man of the name of La Rivière. She believed him a *gentilhomme*, and she gave him a formal promise of marriage, written with her own blood. Bussy did not at first refuse his consent, but when he ultimately discovered that La Rivière was the grandson of a valet of the Chancellor Silléry, he retracted positively. Madame

de Coligny, however, would listen to nothing against the man she loved, and during an absence of her father, on the 19th of June, 1681, she was united to La Rivière. No sooner was the marriage completed than Bussy succeeded in inspiring his daughter with the horror of her degradation, and inducing her to plead the nullity of their marriage.

Madame de Sévigné could not find in her righteous conscience the courage even to feign an approval of such conduct. All she could do was to say that, she admired 'the courage which induced Madame de Coligny to purchase the tranquillity of her life at the price the scandal an affair of this kind must cause;' and in a letter to the Comte de Guitaut, in 1682, the marquise, repeating what she had written to Bussy, protests that she dare not say more for fear 'her hand would shrivel up.' She further adds—'I repeat it, it needs a very uncommon courage; as for me, poor little woman, if I had committed a folly I should imagine nothing better than to drink it, as was done in the times of our forefathers.' At the same time Madame de Sévigné was not indifferent, and she entered into some of the feelings of Bussy. What she desired and hoped was that he and La Rivière would come to some amicable arrangement. She would not herself consent to see La Rivière; 'but if he comes here,' says she, 'we have friends who will be

willing to speak to him; and it is thus one sometimes brings together the things in the world which seemed furthest apart.'

This good will was of no avail: the scandal was faced, the curiosity of the world was fed, the humiliation was undergone, the shame was proclaimed, the weakness was avowed, and all without obtaining the desired result. Two years later, in 1684, Madame de Coligny, losing the suit she had instituted, was compelled to acknowledge her marriage, the birth of a child she had tried to conceal, and further to pay some charity to the poor. 'Bussy jumps to the skies,' writes the marquise to a friend; but his anger was useless, the fate of his daughter was sealed.

We have no particulars as to how was spent the end of 1681 and the beginning of the following year, but in a letter written to the President de Moulceau early in April, 1682, Madame de Sévigné informs him with pleasure that her daughter is much better in health than she was, and that he would recognize the face he had seen at Grignan. 'Monsieur de Grignan and his daughter and son, and our good abbé, are all as we could wish.' The family was then gathered at the Hôtel de Carnavalet. Monsieur de Grignan did not remain permanently in Paris, being frequently called into Provence, the Duc de Vendôme having made but a short stay there. What kept Madame de

Grignan so long in Paris was a lawsuit of immense importance to the house of Grignan. In fact, it was their very name, their fortune, their all, that a collateral descendant of a common ancestor was endeavouring to wrest from them. Such a cause was embraced with the ardour that may be imagined by the proud and clever comtesse. For years she laboured, to be recompensed in the issue.

The President de Moulceau, to whom several letters from Madame de Sévigné are addressed, and to whom she writes with affectionate familiarity, was president of the 'Cour des Comptes' of Montpellier. He was a great friend of Corbinelli; and the marquise had made his acquaintance during her visit to Provence, when he was a visitor at Grignan, and a warm friendship had been established between him and Madame de Sévigné. It was to the President de Moulceau she wrote the following lines on the 7th of August of this year, announcing the news then rendering France mad with joy—the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne:—

'Madame la Dauphine was delivered last night at ten of a Duc de Bourgogne. Your friend [Corbinelli] will write to you the intense joy of the whole court, and with what eagerness everyone expressed it to the king, to Monsieur le Dauphin, to the queen. What a noise! what bonfires! what pouring out of wine! what a dance of two hundred Suisses around the doors! what

shouts of "Vive le Roi!" what bells rung in Paris! what cannons fired! what a multitude of compliments and speeches; and all that will come to an end.'

Madame de Sévigné had remained a great part of the summer of 1682 in Paris; in October, however, she announces to the President de Moulceau that she had been five weeks at Livry with her daughter:—'Often with my son, with my good abbé, with Mademoiselle de Grignan, with the little Grignan, and for a few days with the chevalier.' Such pleasant society added considerably to the charms of Livry, and Madame de Sévigné assures her correspondent of the little hurry they are in to return to Paris. In the month of November, however, the whole family went back to the Hôtel de Carnavalet, and in the month of February, 1683, Madame de Sévigné writes to her friend Guitaut an account of an excursion she had made to Versailles, the magnificence of which increased every year, and the marquise exclaims in admiration,—'I have just come back from Versailles; I have seen those fine apartments; I am charmed with them. If I had read the description in a romance, my favourite castle in the air would have been a hope of seeing such a place in reality. I have beheld and touched it. It is an enchanted place, where reigns real liberty, which is not an illusion, as I had believed it to be. All is large, all is gorgeous; and the music and dancing

are in perfection. These were two things which I dwelt upon in my praises, and which caused me to make my court agreeably, from it being known that I am not quite ignorant on these points. But what is most pleasurable there, is to live whole hours together with the sovereign, to share in his pleasures, and he in ours.

If Madame de Sévigné dwelt with satisfaction on the splendours of Versailles, her heart was not dazzled, and she had time and leisure to think, even when those so dear were near to her and occupying all her thoughts, of her poor peasants at Bourbilly. She reflected with sorrow on their ignorance; she wished, as she expressed it, 'that they might have Jesus Christ preached to them sometimes.' She wrote to Guitaut on this subject—for old remnants of feudal times made him Seigneur of Bourbilly, and the marquise owed allegiance to Epoisses, and she could not act in this without Guitaut's permission.

He did not enter into her desires, but, on the contrary, suggested difficulties, whereupon Madame de Sévigné insisted, at first trying to prove how simple was her demand, and how little it affected his purely nominal rights. 'You must own,' says she, 'that my idea is quite natural when it is joined to a belief which makes me think I am doing something right in aiding the instruction of the people.' It seems to us

that no one in our enlightened day could speak better, and if it was not the general feeling of the seventeenth century; it only proves how much in advance of her contemporaries was Madame de Sévigné on all subjects.

We have noticed the thirst of Madame de Sévigné for all good books, and if we may use such an expression, her curiosity as to heavenly things. The same feeling that made her delight in reading the works of Messieurs de Port-Royal, made her listen with keen appreciation to the sermons which the eloquent preachers of those days delivered in the different churches of Paris, or before the assembled court. Pulpit eloquence was then held in high repute, and such men as Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Fléchier, Massillon, were intrusted with the dispensation of the word of God to the people.

Madame de Sévigné writes to the Président de Moulceau in March, 1683, that she is infatuated with Père Bourdaloue :—'I commenced hearing him on Ash Wednesday at St.-Paul's; he has already preached three admirable sermons. Monsieur de Lauzun does not miss one of them : he will now learn his religion ; I rest convinced it is a thing quite new to him.' This allusion shows us that Lauzun had recovered his liberty, after ten years of close captivity at Pignerol ; the other illustrious captive who had preceded Lauzun to Pignerol,

Fouquet, had also been released, but it was death which had opened for him those heavy gates; he had expired on the 28th of March, 1680.

Madame de Maintenon in the height of her power did not forget the friends of her youth. It was a short note from her hand which informed Mademoiselle de Scudéry, in this year, 1683, that the king had granted her a pension. This announcement was received with warm approval by all the admirers of the illustrious Sapho. 'All Parnassus was in agitation,' and so universally esteemed was the author of the 'Grand Cyrus,' that Madame de Sévigné gives an account of her reception by the king as of an event of general interest.

In the same year there happened several events of great moment to the family of Sévigné and Grignan. Mademoiselle de Grignan's piety was ever increasing, but as yet a resolution as to her future remained in abeyance. The hand of her younger sister, Mademoiselle d'Alerac, was being sought by the Vicomte de Polignac; this, however, was surrounded by a number of difficulties. Madame de Sévigné appears to have had real affection for the 'Belle d'Alerac,' and to have sincerely wished for her happiness. The difficulties encountered had reference solely to financial arrangements. Both the daughters of the first Madame de Grignan, Mademoiselle d'Angennes, were entitled to large fortunes;

but their father, who had borrowed his daughters' portions, found difficulty in repaying them. Monsieur de Grignan offered securities for the future payment, but they did not appear sufficient to Monsieur de Montausier, the uncle of Mesdemoiselles de Grignan, and he refused to be party to any transaction that he did not regard as perfectly honourable. It was by her own mother's family that Mademoiselle d'Alerac saw created the hindrances to a union she seems to have ardently desired. It is difficult now to say who was wrong. Madame de Sévigné declares it was the Duc de Montausier, and it does really appear that on this occasion Madame de Grignan was desirous to promote the happiness of her young step-daughter.

While Monsieur Polignac and Mademoiselle d'Alerac were alternately passing between hope and disappointment, Charles de Sévigné was arranging in Brittany the marriage that was to bring him the happiness of his life. The baron, or, more correctly the Marquis de Sévigné (from the time of his marriage he adopted the title that was his), was on the point of being united to Mademoiselle de Brehant de Mauron, daughter of the Comte de Mauron, 'Conseiller au Parlement de Bretagne.' The conclusion of the alliance was not, however, without impediments, though the demands of Monsieur de Mauron were perfectly natural. He gave to his daughter two hundred thou-

sand francs, a very considerable fortune in those days; believing as he did that Madame de Sévigné preferred her daughter to her son, and knowing that since Madame de Grignan's marriage her mother had given her in presents more than forty thousand écus above the fortune due to her, Monsieur de Mauron insisted on certain securities for his son-in-law. On this occasion, as on all others, Madame de Sévigné acted admirably, though her pecuniary position was very different in 1683 from what it had been in 1669; Sévigné himself having had a large share in the diminution of the fortune; added to which, bad times, and the impossibility of recovering large sums due to her from her tenants, had created a serious difference. She, however, was willing to give up everthing to assure the happiness of her children. But Madame de Grignan was there to create difficulties: she declared herself insulted by the arrangements proposed to her by Monsieur de Mauron, and her refusal to write a civil letter to him was on the point of bringing about a rupture. Had Sévigné not been what he was, the most considerate and affectionate son, and of so amiable a nature that it was impossible to resist his gentle interference, it would have been all over with a marriage not only suitable, but certainly above what, after so many reverses, he could have dared to hope for.

Madame de Sévigné, prompted by her daughter,

though she acceded to everything; though she gave up to her son her dear Rochers, and everything belonging to it; though she settled on him all that Monsieur de Mauron demanded, did not perhaps bring into this transaction her natural amenity. A letter from her son, the most noble and touching ever written to a mother, proves that Madame de Grignan was the sole cause of all those misunderstandings. 'She [Madame de Grignan],' writes Sévigné, 'is dissatisfied with Monsieur de Mauron without knowing why, and upon this she refuses to write two letters which are most essential to me, thereby causing me an infinity of annoyance in a family where I am too happy to enter. . . . The great thing is to marry, and those who take an interest in me, must do all to render it easy. They must imitate you, ma très-chère Madame, who have considered me only in this; who have written when I asked you; who have not taken on the wrong side a false point of honour; and who do not punish me for the faults of Monsieur de Mauron. . . .

'You say again that Monsieur de Mauron has insulted my sister. Upon that point, ma très-chère Madame, I am convinced you must be joking. To make you better understand it, let us go over the question. My sister is insulted; what has been done to her? . . .

'Let us say no more about insult, and consider, if

you please, that I—by the profound respect I have and ought to have for your wishes, knowing the rectitude of your feelings, the goodness of your heart, the justice of your reason for acting as you did on my sister's marriage, and being moreover penetrated with gratitude for what you are doing for me on this occasion, which is, considering the difference of times and the difficulties you are in at present, a great deal more than what you did for my sister—I have always removed anything that might be unpleasant to my sister's feelings in the propositions of Monsieur de Mauron. . . .

'My heart is oppressed at your calling your room at the Rochers your former room. Have you then renounced it, ma très-chère Madame? Will you then cease all intercourse with your son after having done so much for him? Will you deprive him of your presence, and punish him as if he had failed in all that he owes to you? My marriage would not repair such a misfortune, and I love you a thousand times better than all there is in the world. Let me know, I beg of you, something on this, for in truth my heart is so full, that if there were not at this moment some people in my room I could not constrain myself from weeping. Good bye, ma très-chère Madame; do not renounce your son; he adores you, and wishes you all kind of happiness with as

much sincerity and earnestness as he hopes for his own salvation.'

After such a letter, who can doubt what was the conduct of Madame de Sévigné towards her son? Indeed, his good and noble heart justified all she did for him on this occasion. It was a great deal; and that good mother really crowned the work of her life by yielding up to her children the bulk of her fortune during her own lifetime.

The alliance, in spite of Monsieur de Mauron's difficult temper, was all that Madame de Sévigné could wish. She confesses her warm satisfaction at it in a letter to Bussy, at the same time asking him to sign the procuration she sends him:—

'One must never despair of good fortune,' says she. 'I believed it impossible for my son to aspire to a good match. After so many storms and wrecks, without employment, and out of the way of fortune; and while I was meditating on those sad reflections, Providence destined us, or had destined for us, a marriage so advantageous, that even when my son could have least hoped for it, I could not have desired him a better. It is thus we live and walk in blindness, not knowing where we go, taking for bad what is good, and for good what is bad; but always in entire ignorance.'

Madame de Sévigné did not go to Brittany to be

present at the wedding of her son. It was celebrated at Rennes on the 8th of February, 1684. The newly-married couple two days after the ceremony drove from the town to the Rochers, and were received by a thousand vassals under arms. A great number of the nobility on horseback and ladies in coaches went to meet them on the way. The carriage of the young marquise was followed by several others filled with persons of quality. The bridegroom left the carriage and mounted a horse to join the company of cavaliers which, sword in hand, saluted the bride. Finally, all this troop, crossing the park of the Princesse de Tarente, arrived at the Rochers, where a magnificent repast was served. In the following April all these details appeared in the 'Mercure Galant,' which speaks of Monsieur le Marquis de Sévigné as 'the representative of one of the noblest houses of the province.'

Madame de Sévigné at the time of her son's marriage was contemplating an early journey to Brittany. To have to leave her daughter when that daughter was in Paris, was a painful effort for her. The summer was spent with her dear comtesse, but the beginning of September saw Madame de Sévigné on her way to Brittany, accompanied, as before, by her venerable uncle. The separation from Madame de Grignan was the more sad as she this time fully shared her mother's grief. Let us not reflect whether

that mother's heart ought not to have found a potent consolation in the thought of whom she was going to see. After the first anguish of leave-taking had subsided, the marquise could but own that, thinking over the reasons for her journey, she found them so strong, that she understood her own courage at quitting her daughter.

It is evident, from the letters written this year during Madame de Sévigné's stay at the Rochers, and also from letters of other periods, that Madame de Grignan was, strange to say, with all her coldness, jealous of any other affection in the heart of her mother. Whatever faults Madame de Sévigné had, and she herself confesses it, all came 'from the too strong partiality' she entertained for her daughter. It is in trying too ardently to please, to propitiate, to satisfy her daughter, that her conduct and words are no longer in harmony with her good sense. We have no doubt that on this present occasion she feared if she dwelt on anything but her grief she would cause alarm to an affection she never could refrain from regarding but as a precarious treasure. No doubt her sorrow was great; it was too great, in fact; but still we are convinced that it was not unmixed with consolations. The journey was cheerless however; the Bien Bon, old and infirm, was not a companion capable of raising the spirits of his niece. The beauty

of the river was, says the marquise, her principal diversion; but still she did not find in her easy mode of travelling the amusement it had afforded her four years before.

At the Pont de Cé, a league south of Angers, Madame de Sévigné found the carriage and servants of her son awaiting her; an indisposition prevented Sévigné coming in person, and he had sent the Abbé Charrier to welcome his mother. The marquise stopped at Angers, where she was received with every token of friendship by the bishop, Henri Arnauld, uncle of Monsieur de Pomponne. Other friends were there also to offer Madame de Sévigné all the friendly attention she merited, and in her letter to Madame de Grignan she acknowledges her thanks by saying—'We do not do in such fashion the honours of Paris.'

The next letter is dated from the Rochers on the 24th of September. In reality it was Charles de Sévigné who wrote it, Madame de Sévigné adding but a few lines. It is full of expressions of joy at the arrival of his mother, of assurances of his care and affection for her, and contains an entreaty to Madame de Grignan to love her rivals. 'Do not conceive a hatred for me, my fair sister, but follow my example in loving your rivals; it is, from what Madame de Coulanges says, a quality she has recognized in me,

and certainly what I have always felt in my heart towards you.'

Madame de Sévigné gives no account of her first interview with her daughter-in-law; perhaps the reason of this was not to suggest to Madame de Grignan even the slightest cause for jealousy; but we feel certain that Madame de Sévigné's kind and smiling face wore its most gentle aspect to welcome her son's wife. The young Marquise de Sévigné was unfortunately extremely delicate, and had not perhaps those shining qualities which call forth affection at first sight. 'We lead here,' writes the marquise, five or six days after her arrival at the Rochers, 'rather a dull life. . . . My daughter-in-law has few moments of cheerfulness. She is overwhelmed with vapours; her expression changes a hundred times a day, and yet she never looks well. She is extremely delicate; she hardly ever walks; she is always cold; at nine o'clock she is overcome with fatigue. The days are too long for her, and the necessity she has for rest causes her to leave me my liberty so that she may have hers also; this affords me great satisfaction. It is quite impossible to feel there is in this house another mistress than myself. I am served by invisible orders.' Gradually Madame de Sévigné grew to appreciate her daughter-in-law; and one may easily discern that she never said of her all the good she

thought; on this subject, between her and Madame de Grignan there existed always a kind of reserve.

Madame de Grignan seems never to have expressed before so warmly to her mother, her regrets at their separation as she did on this occasion. With much that was good we cannot help discovering in this sentiment a savour of selfishness. When Madame de Grignan left Paris for Provence, she went where she had no equal. The first by right, in possession of the king's authority, in the enjoyment of these grandeurs, in the splendour of her noble residence, she could spare her mother's presence; but in Paris the Comtesse de Grignan was all the better in every way for having by her side a Marquise de Sévigné who adored her. At every moment of the day she must have missed some token of love, of solicitude; she must have encountered some difficulty that had been avoided, become acquainted with some cause of torment that had been concealed from her.

Madame de Sévigné was surrounded by friends who became those of her daughter, and during this autumn of 1684, Madame de Grignan was occupied with petitioning the king at Versailles for some compensation for the great expenses incurred by Monsieur de Grignan, and in such circumstances it would have been a help, it would have been a consolation to have been within reach of Madame de Sévigné. It is not surprising

therefore, if after three years of constant intercourse Madame de Grignan missed that loving presence.

One of the first events Madame de Sévigné heard of at the Rochers was that Mademoiselle de Grignan, without imparting her intention to any one, had left the house of her mother-in-law to take refuge at a convent of Benedictines at Gif. It does not give an idea of her having been on very happy terms with Madame de Grignan, to whose influence she was, however, at a later period to yield in a more important matter.

While the Hôtel de Carnavalêt was full of busy intrigues, the existence at the Rochers was spent, if not happily, at least not unhappily. The young marquise was beginning to propitiate her mother-in-law's heart. 'She has very good qualities, at least I believe so,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'but as yet I can praise her by negatives only. She is not this, she is not that; with time I shall perhaps tell you she is this. She sends you a thousand pretty compliments; she wishes to be loved by you, but without eagerness. She is then not eager. I cannot go beyond this as yet. She does not speak Breton; she has not got the accent of Rennes.'

Madame de Sévigné spent some time in Brittany before seeing her two friends, the Princesse de Tarente and the Marquise de Marbeuf. One was at her 'devotions,' the other mourning a young niece of seven-

teen. It was not very long, however, before the princesse found her way to the Rochers, and made herself welcome to the marquise by speaking to her of Madame de Grignan, and assuring her of her affection for the fair comtesse. The Princesse de Tarente was not without her follies. Her disposition to exaggerate was extreme, and all this, after a separation of some length, struck the marquise more forcibly. If, however, it disposed her to joke at the expense of her good neighbour, it did not hinder her writing—'She is perfectly good and amiable with all that.'

Never before have the letters of Madame de Sévigné so many grave and sad reflections, so little to recall her usual bright spirits. True, the marquise did not feel the presence of another mistress at the Rochers, but the conviction remained that it was no longer hers. It was no more her right to decide and order new improvements; all had gone that rendered tolerable a winter in a country house. There was not, like in Paris, the occupations and visits to divert a sad train of thoughts. Sévigné was no longer so cheerful as had been his wont; age had come also for Madame de Sévigné, taking nothing from the strength of her frame, or the vigour of her mind, but forcing her into meditations most depressing to her nature. When in imagination she saw herself again at the Hôtel de

Carnavalet, what was going on there was not calculated to dispel the gloom that weighed upon her. Appearances there were brilliant, a large retinue, rooms beautifully furnished, an hospitable table, all this met the gaze, but what anxieties, what real poverty all this covered! what debts on all sides, without a possibility of acquitting them! what intrigues to change or better the reality!

To redeem and improve the Grignan fortune was Madame de Grignan's sole occupation. With this view she visits her daughter-in-law at Gif, and suggests to her mind those intentions which a little later were to induce Mademoiselle de Grignan to make over willingly to her father a fortune that naturally ought to have gone to Mademoiselle d'Alerac. From the convent, Madame de Grignan went to Versailles to solicit the monarch, and in his presence, in spite of her intelligence, of the position she occupied in the world, she was overcome, and saw nothing but the majesty. 'Is it possible,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'that in speaking to the king you were quite beside yourself, not seeing, as you say, but the majesty, and abandoned by all your ideas? I cannot believe that my beloved daughter, always full of wit, and of presence of mind, could have found herself in such a position.' Madame de Grignan, however, with all her confusion, had used the words best suited to the

purpose, for what she demanded was granted to her; and her husband received, in consideration for so many expenses incurred in the service of the king, a gratification of twelve thousand francs. It was that unexpected help which made Madame de Grignan write to her mother that with the twelve thousand francs the king had given them, they might well have spent the winter together; but the marquise knew how much the money was needed by those to whom it was granted, and grateful in her heart for the considerate and loving thought of her daughter, she tried to console herself for their separation by the necessity there was for her also to repair the derangement in her affairs by economy and retirement.

A chair of tapestry destined for Monsieur de Coulanges, which occupied the marquise whilst her son was reading to her, 'in perfection,' as she terms it, the books she liked best, and a little conversation with Sévigné were the amusements of the winter months in Brittany. 'In truth,' adds she, alluding to her son, 'we should be very dull without him, and he without us. But he manages so well that there is nearly always a game of hombre in my room; and when the neighbours are gone, we return to our books and our conversations about them. You know what it is at the Rochers. Folio works have taken us but twelve days; that of Monsieur Nicole has occupied

us, "The Lives of the Fathers of the Desert," the Reformation in England. Really, when one is fortunate enough to love that amusement, it is never wanting.'

And then twice a week, as usual, the letters from Paris were eagerly expected, read with delight, often also with tears, and answered at once with gratitude and tenderness. Madame de Grignan was as regular a correspondent as her mother, but the occupations of Paris, the visits, and the thousand little nothings of a busy life made it difficult sometimes to finish her letters in time for the post; friends of her mother came early to see her in order not to miss her, thus trespassing unknowingly on the time allotted to that fond mother. 'All is lost if I do not write to my mother,' exclaims the Comtesse de Grignan, and to this exclamation is given the following response:— 'You are right, my child; I must of necessity receive something; I must see "pied ou aile"* of my dear daughter, and no post can pass without her giving me this consolation; it is my life, my food, the air I breathe.'

It was not only Madame de Grignan who was an assiduous correspondent; others who loved Madame de Sévigné, failing any other means, testified to her their friendship by long and frequent letters. 'I have never seen,' acknowledges gracefully the marquise,

* Foot or wing.

'such attention and such friendship as that of Monsieur and Madame de Coulanges for me; they are the perfect couple where I am concerned; their letters are agreeable each in their different ways.'

Madame de Sévigné, in answer to the description of so many amusements, gay suppers, dinners where the best company was assembled, had but to narrate the course of a very quiet existence. A dinner at the Princesse de Tarente's was an event in the secluded Rochers, and wishing that her daughter should be informed of all she does, Madame de Sévigné gives her even the description of the dress she wore on one particular occasion. 'This is how your mother was dressed: a good dressing gown, very warm, that you have refused, though it is exceedingly pretty; that skirt, lilac, gold, and silver, which I foolishly termed a petticoat, with a handsome undress cap. I was in reality extremely well got up. I found the princesse the same as I was. . . . Tell me something of your dresses; we can only fix our thoughts by images.'

Madame de Sévigné in going to the Rochers had a threefold intention—to pay a visit she owed to her son and his new bride; to repair by economy the disorder in her affairs; and, above all, to blot out the trace of those painful negotiations which had preceded the marriage of Sévigné. In her son she found a ready auxiliary, more than willing to defer to his

mother's wishes and conciliate his sister. All that remained to be settled was done to the entire satisfaction of the marquise. She gave her son his due, in saying that he did it all 'with a very good heart and a perfect good grace. . . . All is put right by a few conversations. Finally, it is done, and nothing can be better, either for you, or for the peace of my life; and even the result will remain after me, and I shall leave nothing but peace between my children, and between my intimate friends. This is what I desired to attain, and I have not wasted my journey.'

Christmas time had arrived, and Madame de Sévigné found that she had been three months at the Rochers. It appeared a longer time to her heart and mind, and days had worn that length which a regular and monotonous existence gives them. On Christmas eve, in the little chapel of the Rochers, Madame de Sévigné had thought of the church in which her daughter was kneeling. It was a small but chosen flock that gathered within the walls of the quiet country chapel. Sévigné had turned his thoughts to the devotion he was to practise henceforth assiduously. 'Your brother is entirely turned to devotion he is learned; he is constantly reading good books; he is touched; he is persuaded. There will come a day when one will be fortunate to have fed on those Christian thoughts. Death is horrible when one is divested of all that can console

in that moment. His wife shares all his sentiments. I am the most wicked of the three, but not enough to be an intruder.'

For the three months Madame de Grignan had been separated from her mother, she had also been deprived of her husband's presence. He arrived in Paris only at the end of December, 1684, and it is not a presumption to say he was received with joy by his wife, for of Madame de Grignan's conjugal affection there can no doubt; no woman was ever more absorbed by her husband and all that concerned the grandeur of his house: the name of the Grignans must shine and derive new lustre in the descendant of their ancient race. The young marquis is the object on which all the members of this proud family centre their hopes and ambition. At thirteen he begins to take an active part in life, and is intrusted as it were with his good name. On that son's head Madame de Grignan looked forward to heap all those honours, those riches, which her proud ambition might make her aspire to. Without effort she retires to bring forward, to throw in the strongest light, her only son—her heir. It is for him she plans; it is for him she solicits; he is her aim, and he is the motive. 'I remark,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'the way in which you always desire that everything should be done for your son's sake; while I, in all I do I see you only, and I prize tenderly the

advance of many years I have over you, as an assurance that according to the rules of Nature I shall keep my rank. It is sweet to me to think that I shall never live without you.'

Madame de Sévigné, who had been unjust when influenced by her daughter, once convinced of her son's considerate conduct, becomes desirous to establish the truth, and she dwells more than once on the generous and disinterested conduct of Sévigné. 'It appears to me,' says she, 'that you will never have to dispute anything with your brother. He loves peace; he is a good Christian, and you do him justice when you find you have as much reason to be as contented with him as you have to be displeased with his father-in-law. He has thought of nothing but to compensate you; it is an exact truth. At last, my beloved, I see peace and union in all the hearts where I desired it should be.'

The year 1684 ended at the Rochers in tranquillity and harmony, and at the Hôtel de Carnavalet the new one began with fresh amusements and pursuits.

CHAPTER IX.

1685.

Madame de Sévigné suffers from a bruise.—Her gratitude for Madame de Grignan's attention to her old friends.—Sévigné and his wife go to Rennes to consult the Capucins.—First appearance at court of the young Marquis de Grignan.—Death of Charles II of England.—Approaching marriage of Mademoiselle de Nantes.—Bussy sends his genealogy to Madame de Sévigné.—Her answer to Bussy.—Madame de Sévigné's warning to her daughter about expenses.—Madame de Grignan goes to Livry for a few days.—Madame de Sévigné visits the Chaulnes at Dol.—She returns to the Rochers, accompanied by Coulanges.—Her friends plan a marriage between her and the Duc de Luynes.—Return journey to Bâville.

THE health of Madame de Sévigné, robust as it was, suffered considerably at this time from the ill-treatment of a slight bruise she had accidentally received on her leg, and which violent remedies had only made worse. She was unfortunately to be treated for months with the same ignorance, and to suffer both pain and annoyance. Madame de Grignan was anxious about this accident; and over and over again is her mother to assure her of a cure, that existed, however, only in her imagination. It would have been better for the

Marquise de Sévigné if, instead of obeying all the extraordinary prescriptions of doctors, Capucins, and volunteer advisers, she had done the same as the Marquise de Marbeuf, who, taken extremely ill with inflammation of the lungs, refused entirely to see any doctor, and above all to be bled. 'We shall blame or approve her,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'according to the result; but as for myself, I am convinced she will escape this time.' She was right, Madame de Marbeuf had but to recover from her illness, and not from the effects of remedies.

Madame de Sévigné cannot find words strong enough to tranquillize her daughter. 'I have been to see the princesse. I walk; I do not look the least ill; think then of your mother otherwise than as of a poor sick woman. I am handsome, and not at all so melancholy as I appear from this scrawl.'

It would have added tenfold to Madame de Sévigné's sufferings, had she known that the thought of them could sadden Madame de Grignan, and hinder her from profiting by the occasions she had of diverting herself. 'But our supper of last night, my daughter, it seems to me it was handsome and well served. I found myself there with the flower of our friends.' And with what gratitude Madame de Sévigné thanked her daughter for her attention to her old friends, the Marquise de Lavardin and Madame de la Fayette.

'Madame de Lavardin is delighted with a visit you have paid her, and I thank you for it. . . . Madame de la Fayette is enchanted with you; she says you are perfect. . . . This is how my friends receive your visits, and are satisfied with you.'

It was a reflection full of satisfaction to Madame de Sévigné to evoke the image of her daughter in the midst of the turmoil of Versailles and Paris, and yet know her to be thinking of her absent mother. Such an affection appeared to her indulgent heart, 'marvellous, rare, and singular;' whilst that she bore for her daughter, she describes as 'natural, in its place, and founded on a thousand good reasons.'

The month of February saw Madame de Sévigné alone for a few days at the Rochers: her son and daughter-in-law had gone to Rennes, chiefly to consult the Capucins about the health of the young marquise. The Capucins, however, rendered her but poor service; for as Madame de Sévigné said, 'it is they who have set the house on fire with their violent remedies.' Yet the confidence in the good fathers was unbounded, and a very short time after, Madame de Sévigné, alarmed at the turn the affection on her leg was taking, determined to go to Rennes and consult them herself, profiting by the kind offers of hospitality of the Marquise de Marbeuf. The Capucins assured Madame de Sévigné that she would promptly recover, if

she obeyed their prescriptions; and with this conviction and belief she returned to the Rochers to put them in practice.

If there were few material events to occupy the days of our marquise, she had much to engage her thoughts. What importance took in her eyes the first appearance at court of her grandson! For the young Marquis de Grignan, when just turned thirteen, was presented to the king, and allotted his share in the diversions of Versailles. He was to take an active part in a masquerade, when lo! Charles II of England dying, deferred the pleasure of the little heir of the Grignans, and the grandmother exclaims—'Ah, my daughter, what a catastrophe! The death of the king of England on the eve of a masquerade.' And addressing her grandson:—'My marquis, you must be very unlucky to meet with so extraordinary an event. . . . My dear child, I make you my compliments on all these great movements. I had been at the masquerade, at the opera, at the ball: I had held myself erect; I had admired you; I had been as nervous as your fair mamma, and I was mistaken.' And then returning to her daughter:—'My dearest, I understand your feelings better than any one. Yes, in truth we live again in our children; and, as you say, we feel more strongly for them than for ourselves. I have experienced so much those emotions! It is a pleasure when one

experiences them for some pretty little person who is worthy of them, and who excites the attention of others. Your son pleases extremely. There is something sprightly and agreeable in his physiognomy ; it is impossible to pass him over; he catches the eye. Madame de la Fayette informs me that she had written to Madame de Montespan that her honour was at stake in you and your son being satisfied with her. There is no one more desirous than Madame de la Fayette of pleasing you.'

The death of Charles II caused but a short pause in the amusement of Versailles; the preparations for the desired masquerade were soon renewed, and three days after the above letter the marquise writes : —'You are then back at Versailles, and your masquerade in preparation again. The death of the King of England has not been able to hold against the eagerness of all the youth for the festivities of Carnival. I hear of nothing but of your beauty : and as you are still young, take pleasure in your pretty face, which even when you were ill did you so much credit: it will go far if you are in health. It is an agreeable thing—the regularity of features, in one word, beauty. I trust you will give me news of my child. I have been quite put out : I had been two days at Versailles intent on seeing him dance, holding myself erect, and I have to begin again.'

The desired day came at last, and the young marquis, dressed as an Indian, went through his part, and was admired. Madame de la Fayette wrote wonders of him to the marquise, who well might say that for her grandson it was an 'important winter, and that his life was so arranged, that if you had given to childhood what was reserved to it formerly, you would have found yourself wrong as to time; but you have taken your measures about him in such a manner, that he must play a great part at fourteen.' And so, to enable the marquis to play this part at fourteen, his mother went often to court, and giving herself up entirely to the turmoil, led the strange and hurried life that was there the rule. 'From dinner they hasten to hear the sermon, and then pass to the comedy.'

In the great gallery of Versailles, of 'royal magnificence unique in the world,' the queen of all, unacknowledged, but powerful, was Madame de Maintenon. Marie-Thérèse was already in her grave, resting there her wearied and suffering heart. Madame de Montespan, the ghost only of a former passion, still handsome, and still, if not young, at least in her prime, was but awaiting her daughter's marriage to quit the scene where she had been so triumphant and so humbled. Mademoiselle de Nantes, brought up on the knees of Madame de Maintenon, was at twelve to be

united to the grandson of the Great Condé. Monsieur le Duc de Bourbon was the chosen husband of the second daughter of Louis XIV; and the summer of 1685 was to see the two children—for the bridegroom was but sixteen—pledged to each other.

Madame de Sévigné, who, as we have already seen, was not insensible to the fact of her descent from great and illustrious ancestors, and who shared her cousin Bussy's veneration for the name of Rabutin, was gratified on receiving at the Rochers a book at which Bussy had been labouring for some time past—the genealogy of their family. In the letter that accompanied it he told his cousin with truth, that though their first ancestor, of whom certain mention was found, was 'a very old seigneur,' he felt convinced his 'company would not displease her. In a word, madame,' writes he, 'I think we have reason to be satisfied with our birth. As for wealth and dignities, we must have more moderation; those advantages are not proportioned to the rest; but regrets avail nothing. . . . Let us console ourselves in thinking that we are at least of a noble house. I knew it confusedly when I was "Mestre de camp général de la Cavalerie," but my disgrace has given me leisure to instruct myself completely on the particulars of my family. It is generally in adversity we begin to know ourselves.'

The dedicatory epistle addressed to Madame de

Sévigné was accepted with pleased gratitude by her, and she says in answer :—'One would needs be perfect, that is, have no vanity, not to be sensible to praises so well administered ; they are so well chosen, and turned in such a fashion, that if one were not careful it would be easy to abandon oneself to the temptation of believing they are merited, at least in part, whatever exaggeration there may be in them. You ought, my dear cousin, to have been always in this blindness to my faults, as I have always loved you, and never merited your hatred. Let us talk no more about it. As you repair the past so well, and in a manner so noble and natural, I am willing now to remain in your debt.'

After so many years, the recollection of the sufferings Bussy had inflicted was not erased from the heart of Madame de Sévigné : she had forgiven, but the remembrance of the wrong could only die with her. We think that if Bussy had any right feeling, the mention of this fault of his youth must have come home bitterly to him now. By the depth of the wound he must have measured the injury he had inflicted, and the sorrow he had caused to one so gentle and virtuous. There is something touching in this allusion, to a past so far behind her, and which could yet move Madame de Sévigné's mind to a shadow of her former indignation.

Madame de Grignan, in thanking Bussy for having sent her his book, and the favourable mention he had made of her in it, alludes also to the past, and tells him that this portrait of her mother she has recognized; it was indeed very different from the first calumny, and worthy of him who wrote it and of her it represented.

Amongst the friends of Madame de Sévigné whose acquaintance her daughter had cultivated during her mother's absence, were the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes, who had spent the winter in Paris. They returned to their province in the summer, and Madame de Sévigné prepared herself to visit them with her son, who was to appear at the Etats at Dinan. It was always an occasion of great magnificence, and to Madame de Grignan was intrusted the task of choosing her mother's and her brother's clothes for this occasion. To her good taste all was left, with the sole restriction to have always 'modesty and economy before her eyes.' 'You are mistress of all,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'provided you keep the reins on the expenses. "I will marry whom you like, provided it be Mademoiselle Hortense."' This warning was necessary to a person who knew not how to impose any bounds on her expensive tastes. The recklessness of her daughter was a source of incessant alarm to Madame de Sévigné. Whatever inclination she might herself

feel to indulge beyond her power any wish of her adored daughter, she was too honest to approve of new and costly acquisitions when aware of how much remained to be paid by the Grignans. 'As to your room, my beloved,' writes she to Madame de Grignan, 'I understand it must be very handsome with all you mention. . . . I know the pleasure of embellishing a room. I should have succumbed to it myself had I not always scrupled to have things that are not necessary, when one has not the necessaries. I have preferred paying debts; and I believe conscience compels me not only to this choice, but to the justice of not contracting new ones. Therefore I blame, maternally and in good part, the desire Monsieur de Grignan has of giving you another mirror. Content yourself, my daughter, with the one you have already; it suits your room, which is still very imperfect, and it is yours by many rights. My only regret is at having given you only the glass: I should have been too happy long ago to have had it adjusted as you have done. Enjoy then the expense, my daughter, without making more, which, being superfluous, would be contrary to the good principles of which we make profession.'

What sagacity, what probity, in these lines! and they must not be read with our sense of the justice of acquitting debts, regarding them simply as matters of principle. In those days there was a wider limit to

such things, and persons of rank and name considered it a very indifferent matter whether they owed much or little. Nearly every one seems to have been in the habit of running deeply into debt. No fortune can allow the owner to live twice above it; but it is what most of the *noblesse* of Paris and the court appear to have done. The constant recurrence to the debts and embarrassments of the wealthiest in the land is a feature that in reading St-Simon must startle the modern reader. The monarch was constantly paying off the debts of his favourites, and in his later years those of his daughters, particularly of Madame la Duchesse; she who had been Mademoiselle de Nantes.

To return to Madame de Grignan: she had quitted Paris for a short time, and had gone to Livry with her family. What delight for Madame de Sévigné to think that her daughter was indebted to her, or rather to the Abbé de Coulanges, for this agreeable resort during the hottest days of summer! Madame de Grignan shared all her mother's predilection for the forest at Livry.

Alluding to this taste of her daughter, the marquise exclaims—'I recognize my blood. Let us speak of Livry: you sleep in your usual room; Monsieur de Grignan in mine; that of the Bien Bon is for the visitors; Mademoiselle d'Alerac above; the chevalier

in the large white room, and the marquis in the pavilion. Is it not so, my dearest?' It wanted little effort in Madame de Sévigné to fancy herself amid scenes and faces she knew so well. Fond as she was of Livry, Madame de Sévigné found increased pleasure in being there when Madame de Grignan was near her; and thinking how happy she might have been were she one of the party at Livry, she says—'Livry and you, it would be too much.'

Madame de Sévigné, who could rarely bring herself to blame her daughter in any circumstance, had found words of reproach only for Mademoiselle de Grignan when the young girl had left the house of her mother-in-law. It was not, in spite of this, without extreme satisfaction, that she heard of Mademoiselle de Grignan's intended return; and, more just this time, she mentions her in affectionate and appreciative terms, saying—'I approve extremely of your wishing to have her back again, to be the joy of your house and the edification of all your family. Will you tell this sainted girl that I always honour her extremely? I had so long the happiness of living with her, that I should wish not to be entirely forgotten by her.'

The time had come when Madame de Sévigné was looking forward to soon again seeing all the family of Grignan, and talking over with her daughter the

different destinies of the 'two sisters.' The marquise still hoped the marriage of Mademoiselle d'Alerac might be happily settled, and that she could herself return in time to be present at the wedding at Livry. In this she was disappointed, not by any delay on her part, but because the union she considered 'as so suitable and desirable,' never took place. The fate of the 'Belle d'Alerac' was to be settled only a few years later, and then not so prosperously as her beauty, name, and fortune deserved.

One of the last things Madame de Sévigné desired to accomplish before leaving Brittany was her visit to her 'good Governors,' for whom she entertained sentiments of the sincerest friendship. 'In truth,' says she, 'I love these good governors. . . . I cannot understand how one can detest them, and envy them, and torment them.' Madame de Sévigné was eager to prove to the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes her affection and deference, and not swell by her indifference the lists of the enemies they had made in the province. It was to Dol the marquise went to see the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes. They received her 'with tenderness, and endless thanks.' She found also at Dol a host of friends; first her 'dear little Coulanges,' who had come with the Duc de Chaulnes, and who was going to return with his cousin to the Rochers.

In the letters written from Dol come the mention of the rest of the expected party, names familiar like those of Lavardin, D'Harouys, and others.

Madame de Sévigné was charmed by the presence of Coulanges. She enjoyed his society all the better because 'at last, at last,' the inflammation in her leg had subsided under the simple and homely remedies of a good woman sent to her by the Princesse de Tarente. In a fortnight she had got quite well, and with little trouble. The poor marquise could only lament that from such a trifle had come so much evil, but in those long delays she had undergone of hope deferred she sees 'the will of God.'

The marquise once again restored to activity, and ever young, walked about her park at the Rochers, receiving with pleasure the praises of Coulanges, who compared the alleys she had planted to those of Versailles. She had much to hear from her cousin, for had he not seen Madame de Grignan? He could speak of her with the mother; he could discourse on all that interested them both—of Mademoiselle d'Alerac's marriage, of the bad health of the poor Chevalier de Grignan. 'What,' says Madame de Sévigné, alluding to him, 'a face of youth and health! What, an age hardly past the first youth, and that compatible with the impossibility of walking!' Coulanges also entertained Madame de Sévigné with the plans he had

formed for her own happiness, for never was woman better loved by her friends.

Whilst she was at the Rochers her friends were conceiving an idea which, had it been carried out, would have, in changing her existence, given her back fortune and a higher rank. The Duc de Luynes, son of the old friend of the Sévignés, the Frondeuse Duchesse de Chevreuse, in 1685 lost his second wife, and was desirous of forming a third alliance. He was a man of parts and consideration, intimate with all the society of Port-Royal, and still hale and strong at sixty-five. The best friends of Madame de Sévigné desired that she should listen to the propositions made to her, and consent at last to a second marriage : they perhaps perceived reasons for its desirableness that had never existed before. But it was too late for Madame de Sévigné to change a mode of existence she had so freely chosen, and to which she had abided perseveringly when the temptations to amend it may have been great. In writing to Madame de la Fayette she disclaimed all idea of a second marriage, and alluded to it in her letters to Madame de Grignan. Madame de Sévigné, who was content in thinking her refusal would increase the regard of her daughter, says to her—'I value greatly your esteem.'

Coulanges remained at the Rochers a fortnight, which in a letter to Madame de Grignan he alludes to

as 'delightful,' and tells her that soon she will see her mother 'as handsome and as amiable as ever.' It was with regret he left his dear marquise to take part in the agitation of the Etats. Coulanges started with Sévigné, who was to wear at the Etats the coat so well chosen by his sister, the good taste of which Madame de Sévigné could not praise sufficiently.

It was no longer months or weeks that separated Madame de Sévigné from the hour of reunion with her daughter. She had now but to be patient for a few days. The day of her departure from the Rochers was fixed, and her travelling preparations completed. She had no longer the handsome retinue of men and horses that had served her formerly; and alluding to it she says, with a touching resignation—'I shall not be ashamed of my equipage. My children have very fine ones: I have had them also, but times change. I have now but two horses, and four hired from the Messager de Mans, but I shall not be ashamed of arriving thus.'

Madame de Sévigné was to join her daughter, not in Paris, or at Livry, but at Bâville, the country residence of the Avocat-général Lamoignon, who was her neighbour in Paris, and whose splendid hôtel still stands untouched by time close to the Hôtel de Carnavalet. The hospitality of Bâville was proverbial,

and the company assembled there always select and agreeable.

At last the long year of separation came to an end. Madame de Sévigné bid adieu to her son and to his young wife, and though she does not mention the tears she shed on this occasion, we are certain that if we possessed her letters to Sévigné, as we do those she addressed to Madame de Grignan, we should see traces of the pang with which she must have quitted her kind and affectionate son. Sévigné had certainly kept his promise to his sister, and watched over his mother with all the devotion and care in his power: her uniform testimony is of his unwearied solicitude. To amuse her, to occupy her, to tend her in sickness, to cheer her in health, had certainly for those twelve months been his constant occupation and aim.

CHAPTER X.

1685–7.

Madame de Sévigné visits Bâville.—Death of the Prince de Conti.—Mademoiselle de Grignan takes the veil at the Carmélites.—Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar takes the veil at the Convent of the Visitation at Aix.—Ambition of Madame de Grignan.—Madame de Sévigné informs Bussy of the conduct of Mademoiselle de Grignan, and of her daughter's share in promoting it.—His answer.—Death of the Prince de Condé.—Death of the Duc de St.-Aignan.—Death of the Abbé de Coulanges.—Departure of Madame de Sévigné for Bourbon.

THE visit to Bâville proved all that Madame de Sévigné had been looking forward to. She met her daughter and all the Grignans with 'a perfect joy,' and had nothing but praises for 'the master of the house, the house, and the company.' After a few days spent in Paris on the return from Bâville, Madame de Sévigné, with her 'dear Grignans,' went to spend the last days of autumn at Livry. She desired nothing more, she wrote to Bussy, than the society of their friend Corbinelli, 'who had, however, other claims, and loved his liberty.' Bussy in answer to his cousin's expressed wish, that he might have been one of the party at Bâville during her visit there,

writes—'How I wish, madam, that I had been at Livry, as well as at Bâville when you were there! If I am supportable in Paris, I am very good company in the country; and the same may be said of all of you. In town one is too dissipated. When I am in your house in Paris, in spite of loving you, my mind is still either with the people I have just left, or with those I am to see later in the day. Moreover, as I am never in a hurry to show wit, a visit is too short to give me the opportunity of doing so. In the country, on the contrary, I have leisure to appear what I am.'

Madame de Sévigné, who had described so charmingly to her daughter the nuptials of the Prince de Conti and Mademoiselle de Blois, now announced, in a letter to the President de Moulceau, the death of the young husband. The union had not turned out as happily as such bright beginnings led to expect, but on the Princesse de Conti being seized with the small-pox, her husband resolutely remained with her, and while tending her he caught the infection, from which he died on the 9th of November, 1685. 'What a death, that of the Prince de Conti!' writes Madame de Sévigné. 'After having escaped all the perils of the war in Hungary, he returns here to die of a complaint of which he had but a slight attack. His fair widow has shed many tears over him. She has one hundred

thousand écus a year; and has received so many tokens of the king's affection, and of his natural tenderness for her, that with such aids no one doubts but that she will console herself.'

A few days after, writing to Bussy, we find coming from Madame de Sévigné's pen some of those reflections on the shortness of life which were so natural to her. The sudden death of Mademoiselle de la Trousse was the cause for entering upon those serious considerations which no doubt the untimely death of a young prince of the blood had already suggested to her mind—Life is short, my dear cousin: it is the consolation of the unfortunate, and the bane of the fortunate, that all reach the same end. Excuse these reflections in a person who has seen Mademoiselle de la Trousse pass in an instant from life to death. . . . A nun entered her room in the morning and found her leaning in her chair, as if she had been asleep. She was so indeed for ever. . . . This has caused me to make many reflections for the last three days.'

Mademoiselle de la Trousse, who was the first cousin to Madame de Sévigné, and sister to Mademoiselle de Méri, had been living since the death of her mother, the Marquise de la Trousse, in the Convent of the Feuillantines, where she had acquired a great reputation for holiness.

Mademoiselle de Grignan, of whose religious voca-

tion there had been a question for six years, in the month of May, 1686, is spoken of by Madame de Sévigné as on the point of taking the 'grand habit des Carmélites,' the austerities of whose rule, however, her delicate health was not to support. While one sister was trying to submit to a life beyond her strength, the other, the 'terrestrial' daughter of Monsieur de Grignan, as Madame de Sévigné termed her, was ruining herself by her preparations for a carrousel, in which Mademoiselle d'Alerac was to appear. It took place on the 29th of May, 1686, in presence of the king and the dauphine, the dauphin himself leading the carrousel.

Mademoiselle de Grignan was soon forced to renounce her intention of embracing the life of a Carmélite, for as early as the month of October of the same year that she had entered the convent, she was forced to quit it; and we should wish Madame de Sévigné had mentioned the fact otherwise than she did. The fortune of Mademoiselle de Grignan, if she was to leave the world for a convent, ought to have gone to her sister, whom it would have made a rich heiress, and powerfully aided to establish in life. It was to this Monsieur de Montausier looked forward when he had opposed the marriage of his niece with Monsieur de Polignac. Things, however, turned out very differently, and when Mademoiselle de Grignan decided to live the life of a nun at the Feuillantines,

she made over the whole of her fortune to her father. Madame de Sévigné, blinded by her partiality, admired not only this act, but the part her daughter had taken in promoting it. 'My daughter,' writes she to the President de Moulceau, 'has so effectually contributed to this little manœuvre that it affords her a double joy. The chevalier also has done wonders.' Madame de Sévigné had succeeded in persuading herself that there was justice in this perfect abandonment of a fortune so evidently by every right that of Mademoiselle d'Alerac; and to profit by which Madame de Grignan had not the slightest claim.

While all this was keeping Madame de Grignan in Paris, the marquise had spent the whole of the month of August at Livry with her son and her good abbé. Sévigné had come to pay his mother a visit, and she declares that 'this long companionship has brought about a renewal of their acquaintance, which had renewed also their affection.' Mother and son had together 'endless conversations,' and Madame de Sévigné saw the marquis return to Brittany in perfect health, and 'with a Christian philosophy tainted with a little bit of an anchoret. Above all this, an excessive tenderness for his wife, which on the whole makes of him the happiest man in the world, because he spends his life according to his own fancy.'

It is with pleasure we note this testimony of

Madame de Sévigné's appreciation of her son, and of his happiness. We like to think of him in his ancient manor as contented with his lot, and above those ambitions which so effectually ruined the peace of some of his family. It is to be supposed that had Sévigné been blessed with children, he would have considered himself rich enough to keep them near him; and not have acted by the example of the Grignans.

The young Marie-Blanche, the long ago sacrificed child, the holocaust offered to the heir, saw her fate sealed in the beginning of the year 1687. She took the veil at sixteen in the Convent of the Visitation at Aix, where she had been brought up. Let us hope that her little heart, so heavy and so troubled at ten, had grown quieter and more resigned; but it is a destiny full of uncertainty. Every conclusion to be drawn from the correspondence concerning this eldest daughter of Madame de Grignan, prove that none ever had so little the disposition to embrace the sad life of the cloister. Who knows what gifts God had given to this child? may be she kept the promise of her early childhood, and grew to resemble her grandmother. If so, if her disposition was that bright and life-loving one of the gay Rabutins, what combats must have torn the heart of one who was denied every affection! At five years of age Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar was

yielded by her mother to the Church; at sixteen she died to the world she knew not; and at sixty-five she quitted the life spent wholly in the walls of that convent in Provence.

World-wise were the Grignans, but little avail was it to them. From generation to generation all the children had to make way for the first-born son. When Madame de Grignan married, two uncles of her husband—the Archbishop of Arles and the Bishop of Uzès—represented that worldly policy, designed to better the lot of one. Of the four brothers of Monsieur de Grignan, two were in the Church; another a Chevalier de Malte, and the only one not in priestly orders, the Chevalier de Grignan, was naturally destined to celibacy by the customs of the time and the meagreness of his fortune. All this was done that the house whose name they bore, and whose glory they made their own, might see its pride better upheld in the person of the eldest son of the head of the family. Alas, vanity of our wisdom! all these ambitions, these sacrifices, tended only to see extinct in the person of the young marquis the name of Grignan. Of a family so numerous thirty years before, not one remained to transmit that proud heirloom, and Madame de Grignan, whose ruling passion it had been, saw in the death of that son the end of her tender solicitude, of her ambitious hopes for the name of Grignan.

We have said that Madame de Sévigné, under the influence of her daughter, had grown to look upon the gift of Mademoiselle de Grignan's fortune to her father as an act perfectly equitable and natural. As she had announced it to the President de Moulceau she informs Bussy of it, and in no way tries to lessen her daughter's share in this transaction. On the contrary, she rather exalts it, telling Bussy that Madame de Grignan has 'done wonders,' and she begs him to rejoice in her prosperity. This admirable cleverness of Madame de Grignan had not received from the world the commendation a blind affection bestowed on it. The answer of Bussy to Madame de Sévigné on this occasion is a delicate irony spoken in terms which show the judgment of discerning good sense:—'You have given me great pleasure, my dear cousin, by informing me of the care the Belle Madelonne has taken to inspire noble sentiments in her eldest step-daughter, and the happy results of her endeavours. I am not astonished, for is it possible to refuse Madame de Grignan anything? I am delighted, and my daughter also, who moreover adds, that God has granted her a great favour in not having given her such a step-mother, for if such had been the case she would certainly by this time be in a convent, for which she feels but a very moderate inclination.'

We see by this letter that Bussy had no doubt who had inspired those religious aspirations in Mademoiselle de Grignan, and as Madame de Grignan prided herself for her conduct on one occasion, she was given credit for even more than she had done, or at least was desirous to appear to have done. But the concerns of the house of Grignan did not alone fill Madame de Sévigné's letters to her cousin and to her friend Monsieur de Moulceau. She seems to have reserved the latter as a chosen correspondent to whom to announce great public events, and it is to him she imparts the news of the death of the Grand Condé. It had taken place at Chantilly, the princely residence of the hero, on the 11th of December, 1686. Monsieur le Prince had retained full possession of his faculties till the last, having bid adieu to all his family gathered around his bed, but without uttering a word of pardon for the sorrowful wife whose mournful existence was being passed in the banishment and seclusion of a country residence resembling a prison. It was to such a fate Richelieu had condemned his niece when he gave her for husband Louis de Bourbon. In her youth forsaken, then falling into error, she cruelly expiated her faults by the hardest punishment which could fall on a woman. Her son was as unforgiving as her husband had been, and the words of recall never came for the Princesse de Condé.

She died abandoned by all, while to the victor of Rocroy and Fribourg was reserved a funeral pomp worthy of his renown and princely name. Madame de Sévigné, writing to Bussy, and alluding to the ceremony which took place in March, 1687, says—'It was the most magnificent and triumphant funeral pomp that had ever been awarded to a mortal. . . . It cost the present Monsieur le Prince one hundred thousand francs; but such an expense is an honour.' One of the funeral orations spoken over the Prince de Condé was delivered by Père Bourdaloue and listened to by Madame de Sévigné. 'He [Bourdaloue] surpassed himself,' writes Madame de Sévigné to Bussy. 'His text was, "That the king had mourned him, and said to his people: we have lost a prince who was the support of Israel."'

It was the heart only of the Great Condé that had been interred in the church of the Jesuits; and it was of the heart of the hero that Bourdaloue spoke. 'He proved that his heart was solid, righteous, and Christian.' And then Madame de Sévigné reviews in eloquent terms the address thus divided into three parts. She ends by saying—'He painted his death to us in words ineffaceable in my mind and in that of the whole congregation, which appeared to be hanging on all he said in such a way that one did not breathe. I cannot even give you an idea of its beauty, and

I spoil it by this rough sketch; it is as if a dauber attempted to touch a picture of Raphael.'

Madame de Sévigné and Bussy, who was her elder by some years, had arrived at that period of their lives when they must see falling around them many of the friends of their youth, some their elders, some younger than themselves. The mention of deaths will now be frequent in Madame de Sévigné's correspondence; first one, then another falls out of the ranks of the living. It was a solemn warning, and not unheeded by one who might say with truth, that God had granted her the grace to contemplate seriously that last act of her life.

It was Madame de Sévigné who announced to Bussy the death of his 'faithful and good friend, St.-Aignan.' Such indeed had been the Duc de St.-Aignan for a number of years to Bussy. A favourite of the king, he never disowned his friend after he had incurred the anger of the monarch. It was he who presented all those letters written by Bussy to Louis XIV. He it was who solicited and obtained permission for the exile to return sometimes to Paris. In fact no man served another with truer zeal, with more disinterested friendship than St.-Aignan had served Bussy. Rare to say, he did not by his good services provoke ingratitude. Of their value Bussy seems to have been as appreciative and thankful as it

was in his power to be, and he mourned sincerely when he heard of the death of the old duc. Death struck one rich in years and honours. 'One may say he died young, though they tell me he was eighty,' writes the marquise. 'He had felt neither in intelligence, temper, nor in body, the sad infirmities of age. He had always served the king on his knees with an agility that people of eighty never have. . . . I have felt this death strongly for your sake: he has rendered you services no other courtier would have dared or wished to render you.'

The feelings of Bussy on this occasion were all that Madame de Sévigné had imagined; and there is every appearance of sincerity in the expressions of his regret. He recalls to mind every occasion on which the Duc de St.-Aignan had served him, and does so with a really touching recurrence: he appears to find pleasure in acknowledging his great obligations to his good friend. 'This is the friend I have lost, madame,' he writes; 'judge, then, if there be a man more to be pitied than me, or a man more to be esteemed than him; for, above all the merit he had in my eyes, he possessed intelligence, extraordinary valour, and a heart such as kings ought to have.'

There is one passage in Madame de Sévigné's letter which may need a word of explanation. 'He had always served the king on his knees' was not an

image; it was the representation of a fact. This custom, extraordinary, and contrary to that high feeling of pride which made the old nobles of France consider themselves as the peers of their sovereign, was implanted in that country by Anne of Austria. Madame de Motteville often represents the queen with her ladies kneeling round her, and the fashion of beds raised on steps, and which made kneeling the most convenient attitude for those who might not be seated, had rendered it general towards queens and princesses. We have seen Madame de Sévigné herself kneeling in the *ruelle* of MADEMOISELLE, and it was simply as an instance of the elasticity of frame of the old Duc de St.-Aignan that she alluded to it.

During this year, 1687, Madame de Sévigné had contrived to retain Madame de Grignan near her, and a journey to Provence, of which there had been some talk in the summer of 1686, was still deferred. The correspondence with Bussy, therefore, continued frequent, and in that tone of easy confidence which disposed both to impart to each other the events of their lives and the reflections of their minds. The existence of Madame de Sévigné was, in the summer of 1687, clouded by an event which caused her the truest and deepest grief. She lost her kind Bien Bon, the friend of her life, and her regrets are spoken in words glowing with tender gratitude. 'I am over-

come with sadness,' writes she to Bussy, the day after her bereavement. 'I have lost my dear uncle: you know what he was for his dear niece. There is no good he has not done me, either in giving me the whole of his fortune, or repairing that of my children. He rescued me from the abyss I was in at the death of Monsieur de Sévigné; he has gained our lawsuits; he has put all my estates in a flourishing condition; he has made the domain where my son lives the prettiest and most agreeable one in the world; he has aided in the marriage of my children: in a word, it is to his continual care I owe the peace and tranquillity of my life. You understand easily that such obligations and such a long habit cause a cruel sorrow when it is a question of separation for ever. The loss of even very old people does not prevent its being less painful, when we have great reasons to love them, and have always known them. My dear uncle was eighty. . . . Life was but a burden to him; what then would we desire for him? . . . It is these reflections which have helped me to have patience. . . . This is, my cousin, what has occupied and afflicted me the last fortnight. I am penetrated with grief and gratitude. Our hearts are not ungrateful, for I remember all that your gratitude made you think and write on the merit of the Duc de St.-Aignan. We are very far from forgetting those who oblige us.'

Madame de Sévigné, who had suffered somewhat in her health during the last few months, and to whom a great disposition to giddiness had inspired some fear of apoplexy, determined after the loss of her uncle to put in execution a plan she had formed, of going to Vichy, and which had been delayed on account of the Abbé de Coulanges' illness. The idea of Vichy was however abandoned through the persuasions of the Duchesse de Chaulnes, who took the marquise with her to the baths of Bourbon.

CHAPTER XI.

1687-8.

Feelings of Madame de Sévigné on the death of her uncle.—Journey of Madame de Sévigné and the Duchesse de Chaulnes to Bourbon.—Mademoiselle d'Alerac leaves the house of her step-mother.—Bussy's letter to Madame de Sévigné on her return to Paris.—Her grief at leaving Livry.—The Chevalier de Grignan defends his sister-in-law in an interview with the Duc de Montausier.—Monsieur d'Harouys arrested.—Madame de Sévigné's reflections on life.—Madame de Grignan gains her lawsuit.—Admiration of Madame de Sévigné and Bussy for the work of Abbadie, 'The Truth of the Christian Religion.'

THE sentiments Madame de Sévigné expressed on the death of her uncle are an honour to both. It was a close and sacred tie which held together Madame de Sévigné and the Abbé de Coulanges. Well and truly might she say that her Bien Bon had done her all manner of good. From childhood to old age he had watched over her and cared for her; for hers, and for her welfare as the sole objects of his existence. It is not alone in this respect that the Abbé de Coulanges did his niece the highest services. Her conduct to her uncle was the great and austere duty of Madame de

Sévigné's life; one which, devoid of all those satisfactions mixed with pride and tenderness such as bound her to her children, and particularly to her daughter, was nevertheless always regarded by the marquise as the most sacred. In such a light, of what utility was the Abbé de Coulanges to her? Duty is the tie that holds us to existence; it is the powerful, the strengthening influence that prompts all good actions; it is the vigilant guardian of the human heart, the last consolation of him who knows no other.

How lonely would Madame de Sévigné have felt the day that saw Madame de Grignan start for Provence, if she had returned to her home to find there an entire solitude! Of what weight would such an independence have been; what a burden to a woman, still young, still beautiful, still adored! But on her return she met, not with a pleasant and gay companion perhaps, but with a duty in which, with much that was irksome, there was much sweetness; for the sentiment of being all in all to another is one of the most blessed feelings granted to our poor nature to enjoy: it was the Godlike consolation of a God dying on Calvary for a world!

Madame de Sévigné owed to the good abbé this happy conviction, and to him only was she indebted for it. She well knew that neither in her daughter's heart, nor in her son's could she stand alone: for her

uncle she was his sole affection; the one thought, care, and solicitude of his existence; and when he died, to the last hour lovingly tended, watched, and consoled by his 'dear niece,' as she so touchingly termed herself, she felt that no one could ever take that place the Abbé de Coulanges had filled. She had yielded to him, to his comfort many desires of her heart, and yet when he was gone for ever, the cry of her heart is—'I am but too free.' Yes, indeed, independence is but a sad gift, for it too often goes together with loneliness. How often is it we find ourselves wondering at the grief felt by others, at a loss we regard sometimes for them as a relief! We are surprised, we doubt, we question even the sincerity of those regrets, only because we do not reflect how precious it is sometimes to have a burden, and how preferable always than to stand alone.

For those who are accustomed to see recurring constantly under the pen of Madame de Sévigné the name of her Bien Bon, this absence strikes as a blank, and it is with something akin to sorrow we see withdrawn from the scene present to our mind's eye the sedate and portly image of the Abbé de Coulanges. Indeed we think the perusal of nothing so much as the letters of Madame de Sévigné is calculated to impress us with the rapidity of time and the shortness of life. So quickly do we meet with a changing aspect—to-day

Madame de Sévigné stands before us in blooming womanhood; a few pages, a short pause as it were, and Madame de Grignan has taken her place; and there we see resumed in their eloquent brevity the thoughts, the hopes, the aspirations of two hearts during twenty-six years; and while with them we are still planning and hoping, lo! the young bride of yesterday, the Belle Madelonne, her youth insensibly passed, stands before us a woman of forty! And our marquise! In vain we would wish to pause, the great stream has been running its hurried course, and age has come for one who seemed formed for eternal youth. It seems to us we have now arrived at a period where there is something like cruelty in hastening on. We would wish to step back and linger at leisure over those last remaining years—speeding over them seems as if we were hurrying to her doom that living woman we see so distinctly before us.

We have left Madame de Sévigné journeying to Bourbon with the Duchesse de Chaulnes. The progress was through a charming and cultivated country which the marquise describes 'as the road to paradise; but no, for they say the way there is narrow and rugged, and this is broad, agreeable, and delightful.' The last day, however, was not so prosperous as the first five had been, and the first impression Madame de Sévigné received of Bourbon was not favourable either. 'It is

a flat country, and covered like Brittany ; a dark forest where the sun rarely shines.'

On all sides, however, benefit from the baths and waters was promised to the marquise. 'The Duchesse de Chaulnes,' writes she to her daughter, 'takes a care of me that would astonish you. She desires a thousand compliments to you, and names you every moment. The fair comtesse is naturally in all she says to me.'

Madame de Sévigné at Bourbon was, as everywhere else, wholly occupied with the concerns of her daughter. Madame de Grignan was at the time soliciting fresh pecuniary compensation for her husband from the king, and as the need of the gift was great, the anxiety to obtain it was equal. There were also strong discussions between the fair comtesse and her step-daughter, Mademoiselle d'Alerac : they ended by the young girl quitting Madame de Grignan's house for that of her uncle, the Duc de Montausier. This scandal happened during the stay of Madame de Sévigné at Bourbon, and she tells her daughter she feels 'the horror of it,' naturally finding Mademoiselle d'Alerac alone to blame. The world judged otherwise, and pronounced a severe censure on Madame de Grignan. The Duc de Montausier ordered a seizure of Monsieur de Grignan's property, to compel him to pay the fortune of his daughter. It was a violent rupture, and Mademoiselle d'Alerac

was never to return to Madame de Grignan. It is not necessary to remark on the share the disposition of Mademoiselle de Grignan's fortune must have had in promoting this resolution of her sister; and it is impossible to believe that Mademoiselle d'Alerac was not urged to taking the step by some great wrong suffered from Madame de Grignan. A temper so haughty and rebellious, even in the eyes of an adoring mother, could not have been easily brooked by a young, handsome, and rich step-daughter, who could on this occasion bring home to her step-mother such a manifest spoliation of her rights. All this was not without causing much agitation to Madame de Sévigné, who says that —'If one dared to think one would be overcome, but we throw all such thoughts on one side.'

Occupied though Madame de Grignan was in Paris, both agreeably and unpleasantly, she wrote regularly as usual to her mother, and rather alarmed Madame de Sévigné's good feelings by an excess of solicitude which caused her to blame, violently, the Duchesse de Chaulnes for having persuaded the marquise to go to Bourbon instead of Vichy. Madame de Sévigné, who had reaped nothing but advantages of every sort from the company of the Duchesse de Chaulnes, could not bear the idea that on meeting them Madame de Grignan should show any of the feelings she expressed on this subject. It is amusing to see to what pains

Madame de Sévigné goes to persuade and convince her daughter, and to dispose her to testify to Madame de Chaulnes nothing but friendship and gratitude. 'If you love me,' says she, 'and if the care one has of me is what pleases you, then what do you not owe to this good Duchesse de Chaulnes?'

It is pleasant to notice the perfect sincerity of all Madame de Sévigné's feelings: the evident proof of it lies in her letters to her daughter, where, free from all restraint, she moreover invariably praises, defends, and upholds those for whom she professed friendship. At Bourbon, for example, she was no doubt protesting her gratitude and affection to Madame de Chaulnes; and she does so in even stronger terms when writing to Madame de Grignan. 'She has,' says she, 'an attention for me comparable to yours: she deserves nothing but thanks, and you look upon her as having unsettled and hindered all my remedies. In the name of God, my daughter, banish such ideas if you are just, and if you love me; and at Essonne, if you are decided to come to meet us, let there exist no other feeling in your mind than joy at seeing us in good health; and in particular nothing but gratitude for this good duchesse.'

Madame de Grignan could not however meet Madame de Sévigné at Essonne as she had intended: the court being at Fontainebleau, her affairs demanded her presence there, and it is probable Madame de Sévigné

did not even find her daughter in Paris when she arrived there on the 19th of October.

Shortly after her return to Paris Madame de Sévigné received a letter from Bussy, in which he expressed the anxiety her silence had caused him, having heard that she was ill, and his affection for her. He did so, going over as it were all his life, that of his cousin, and showing the strong ties that had always held them to each other. 'I have all my life loved you extremely, my dear cousin, and our little quarrels were not a proof that you were indifferent to me; but I have never loved you or esteemed you as much as I do to-day. What makes me say so is, that I fear to lose you more than I have ever done. What could I do in the world without you, my poor cousin? with whom could I laugh? with whom could I be witty? in whom could I have entire confidence of being loved? with whom could I speak openly on all subjects? For the Belle Madelonne, who is my friend also, is not you, and would not replace you.' Her husband and her family occupy all her heart and mind. There would then remain to me only your niece [Madame de Coligny] and our friend [Corbinelli]; and far from consoling me for you, they would only help to remind me, and make me regret you the more. Be careful of yourself, my dear cousin, and join to the interest you have in your health, the consideration of the peace of Madame de

Grignan, and of us, your best friends. I have had philosophy enough to do without the honours and establishments that I believed due to me, but I should have none to do without you. It would require pure Christianity.'

Madame de Sévigné was not one to receive coldly such a letter: she termed it the 'most amiable and affectionate ever written,' and answered it at full length, as if convinced that what she had to say would interest her cousin. She first alludes, to dwell upon it with fond regret, to the death of her uncle. 'You owe to him,' says she, as if forcing Bussy to take a share in her sorrow, 'my gaiety, my good humour, my vivacity, the gift I had of understanding you, the intelligence which made me comprehend what you had said, and guess what you were going to say. . . . He had made me such as I am, such as you have seen me, and worthy of your esteem and friendship.'

Madame de Sévigné on returning from Bourbon had the pleasure of going back for a few days to her dear Abbaye of Livry, which had not yet been given to another possessor. It can be imagined that it was not without strong emotion the marquise bid good-bye to the 'amiable solitude' she had so much loved. She could not quit it without tears. 'After having wept for the abbé, I wept for the abbaye,' says she. And so ended those frequent and happy visits to Livry; no

more are we to follow Madame de Sévigné there, and see her in her forest contemplating the fresh green of spring or the golden richness of autumn. That relief from Paris, from cares, from fatigue, was no longer near at hand; and it is perhaps difficult to exaggerate the bitterness of such a privation.

Madame de Sévigné speaks on more than one occasion of her love for inanimate objects, and Livry was to her the loved home of her childhood, her chosen retreat through life. The sorrow she experienced at seeing it, when she had turned sixty, pass into the hands of strangers was very great and serious; and the tears Madame de Sévigné shed on looking back at Livry were perhaps some of the most bitter that ever escaped her. It was in reality as a first leave-taking of earthly things. Already the Rochers (and how differently she regarded the Rochers and Livry it is not necessary to remark) knew another mistress: Livry had remained; it was hers without dispute, for it was the good abbé's. But when she saw it go from her by his death, she must have felt it grievously. No one had despoiled herself more for her children than Madame de Sévigné had done. A rich heiress, her old age was far from being affluent: she felt the privation of many things, and that of a garden all her own was perhaps not the meanest or most indifferent one. We do not think we are mistaken when we

suggest this train of thought of Madame de Sévigné, for in a letter written to Bussy in the month of December—that is, about two months after her last visit to Livry—she says as if musing, 'We are no longer young, my dear cousin; it is a great pity. It seems to me we were livelier than others, and that few people were worth more than us.'

The new year 1688 found Madame de Grignan still in Paris with her mother, and Monsieur de Grignan in Provence. It is there his wife addresses him her good wishes, and informs us, in informing him (for this letter is one of the rare ones preserved), of the occupations of the different members of the family. Madame de Grignan herself had been to Versailles for a few days: she had paid her court, and seen her step-daughter, who, says she, 'is at all the balls.'

Mademoiselle d'Alerac, living with her first cousin the Duchesse d'Uzès, could but find herself agreeably placed at court. Madame de Grignan and Mademoiselle d'Alerac had met without speaking to one another, and noting this as somewhat an indifferent matter, the comtesse goes on to thank Monsieur de Grignan for a superb skirt he had sent her. 'It is the most magnificent skirt at Versailles.' MONSIEUR had remarked it, telling Madame de Grignan he thought her 'too good a housewife to have bought such a stuff

herself.' 'I owned to him,' says she, 'that it was a gift of yours, and I gave you all the honour of it.'

While Monsieur de Grignan was bestowing on his wife such costly presents, she was showing the same extravagance in regard to her son. Monsieur de Grignan was forced to tell her that she never thought the young marquis had coats enough, and she asserts her moderation, announcing at the same time that she thinks she will go to the expense of buying him 'a coat for the ball [at Versailles] worthy of him.'

But there were more important matters to discuss between the husband and wife than the expenses (to be paid in a very problematic future) of Madame de Grignan for her son. Monsieur de Montausier had not hesitated to have recourse to extreme measures, in order to compel Monsieur de Grignan to clear off his debt to his daughter. It had been done moreover haughtily and arrogantly; and a statement in which were notified Monsieur de Montausier's reasons for refusing the arbitration Monsieur de Grignan demanded, was, according to Madame de Grignan, 'worded as if written by a prince of the blood to a shopkeeper in the Rue St.-Denis.'

The Chevalier de Grignan had been despatched to see and speak to Monsieur de Montausier. He did so, supporting in this interview every act of his

sister-in-law, and terming Mademoiselle d'Alerac the 'worst heart and the most ungrateful creature in the world to forget the obligations she owed to Madame de Grignan.' Monsieur de Montausier, however, would refer unpleasantly to the subject of Mademoiselle de Grignan's gift of her fortune to her father, 'of which he made a great point,' says Madame de Grignan. 'Monsieur de Montausier asked the chevalier if it were true he boasted of having promoted the action of his niece, and the answer of Madame de Grignan's faithful ambassador is more proud than satisfactory. He contented himself with saying that though he 'boasted of few things, he would of that one had he done it.'

It is a painful sight to see Monsieur de Grignan yielding up so completely his daughter, and compelled to approve and uphold his wife in a wrong done to that daughter for his sole profit. It is not surprising that, finding so few sympathizers with her in her father's family, Mademoiselle d'Alerac was glad to quit her home. Interest and necessity had blinded the judgment of two persons who were certainly of no questionable integrity. Madame de Sévigné and the Chevalier de Grignan found themselves enlisted in supporting a cause their better sense must have repudiated; and there can be no doubt what censure Madame de Sévigné would have pronounced on such

an event had it happened in any family but that of her daughter.

It is in this letter of Madame de Grignan to her husband that we find the first intimation of the arrest of Monsieur d'Harouys. We have seen him in Brittany, holding great state, and shining by his generosity. It was that generosity which became fatal to him. He forgot that he was intrusted with the wealth of a province; that the sums passing through his hands to ought be sacred; and though no suspicion ever attached to one who was disinterestedness in person, the day came when he was unable to give an exact account of his management. The confidence in him had been so great that years had been allowed to pass without any investigation of his accounts. When it came, D'Harouys was unable to meet it. Enormous sums were missing, that had been squandered, or lent, or given away; and, strange to say, the only example of such a case, as St.-Simon remarks. Even those who were ruined by their misplaced confidence in Monsieur d'Harouys did not withdraw from him their warmest sympathies when the punishment came, and the poor 'Trésorier des Etats de Bretagne' exchanged his happy life for the Bastille.

D'Harouys had married Monsieur de Coulanges' sister, and was thus closely allied to Madame de Sévigné. She had regarded him always as a dear

friend, and her compassion in his misfortune was great. This was another of those visitations falling on one in apparent prosperity, and it must have reminded the marquise of that great fall of Fouquet years before.

If reflections, sometimes sad, sometimes consoling, but always grave, are often to be met with in the early correspondence of Madame de Sévigné, as she advanced in years it is not surprising they should become more frequent; and they are the more touching, the more admirable, we may even say, in one to whom perfect health and uncommon vigour of mind and body might have so easily allowed to put away from her thoughts the contemplation of a subject both painful and terrible. But her courage was of the best: the darker that gloomy portal appeared to her, the more decided was she to have in hand a bright taper to lighten its gloom. Those books which had interested her in youth she now sought in a more serious disposition, to find in them an assurance and a trust of which she felt so much the need. It is with Bussy, older than herself, but strong and hale, that she exchanges many of her grave meditations. We have insisted before on the similarity of disposition in some points between the two cousins, and particularly as regarded the contemplation of death. Madame de Sévigné knew she would meet with a sympathetic listener when she says,

'In truth you are right; life is short, you are already far advanced in it, and it is of no use getting impatient. This consolation is sad, and the remedy worse than the evil; still it must have its effect, together with the thought, not cheerful either, of the small place we fill in this great universe, and how little it signifies to the end of all things that there should have been a Comte de Bussy happy or unhappy. I know well that it is for the short moment we are in this world we should wish to be happy; but we must persuade ourselves it is the most impossible thing, and that if you had not borne the sorrows you have had, you would have felt others according to the order of Providence. . . . We must then resign ourselves to bear without murmur all it pleases God to do with us.'

It was not in a moment of discouragement Madame de Sévigné wrote this. On the contrary, it was after the happy exultation of seeing Madame de Grignan triumph with all the family in the gain of their great lawsuit. It had been as complete and as triumphant as they could wish it, and the anxiety that had tormented them for six years had vanished. After the first moment of joyful thankfulness, had followed the thought that this desired and hoped-for success was the natural termination of Madame de Grignan's sojourn in Paris. Now recurred again the idea of separation; and a thousand reasons, easily understood

by all, must have rendered it more painful than ever to Madame de Sévigné.

We were speaking of Madame de Sévigné's reading: she was at the period we now allude to occupied with the perusal of a book which Bussy was also studying, and which occupied the wise Corbinelli; in fact, it was in the hands of all. It was (three years after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes) the work of the Protestant divine, D'Abbadie—'The Truth of the Christian Religion.' Madame de Sévigné can only call it the 'most divine of all books;' and hereafter it is to remain ever one of those favourite friends to which she is never tired of referring for advice and consolation.

It was a puzzling question for those the chief article of whose creed it was to believe D'Abbadie naturally doomed to perdition, to decide how such a man could have written such a book. Madame de Coligny said—'She was ready to wager D'Abbadie would not die a Huguenot, not imagining Jesus Christ could allow one to perish who had so well proved Him; and I,' adds Bussy, 'who answer for nothing, I say that if Abbadie dies in his religion, it would make me believe that we can be saved in both.'

Madame de Sévigné, who found no terms too strong to express her admiration of a work of which she says, that 'If it had given her as much love of God as it

had persuaded her of the truth of her religion, she would be a perfect saint'—concurred in this with Bussy, and both their minds committed the heresy of believing a Huguenot might be saved.

Let us in this circumstance again entreat our readers to judge of this, not by the ideas of our day, but by those of the time in which such lines were written; they were, considering the time, a marvellous token of an independent judgment.

CHAPTER XII.

1688.

Fears of Madame de Grignan at the approaching campaign of her son.—Madame de Grignan leaves Paris.—The little marquis serves as a volunteer at the siege of Philipsbourg.—Madame de Sévigné's efforts to tranquillize her daughter.—The young marquis is slightly wounded before Mannheim.—Madame de Grignan is joined by her daughter Pauline.—She complains of the temper of her daughter.—Advice of Madame de Sévigné.—The young marquis returns to Paris.—Deplorable condition of the affairs of the Grignans.—They receive the government of Avignon.—Monseiur de Grignan is named a Chevalier du St.-Esprit.

EVIL and good being inseparable in life, Madame de Sévigné saw her satisfaction at the fortunate issue of the Grignan's lawsuit marred by the assurance that soon she must part with her daughter. That daughter, who had been looking forward to a little repose after so many fatigues, writes to Bussy—'But, monsieur, at the moment I was hoping to enjoy the tranquillity my exertions had earned for me, I am terrified by a rumour of war. I have a son who has taken the liberty to be seventeen. They say it is a propitious age, not to plead, but to go to war: this is what

obliges me to wish he were older, better to support the fatigues of it; or younger, not to be exposed to them. But it is an evil for which there is no cure.'

Young indeed was the son of Madame de Grignan when he began life in earnest. At an age when boyhood is hardly passed, he was preparing to play an active part, and risk his life in the wars of his country. A mother's solicitude is but too comprehensible when it rests on one so young. Sad were those last months in Paris; and September saw a great, heart-breaking and tearful leave-takings. 'I am sad, my dear cousin: our dear Comtesse of Provence goes in a week, and this separation tears my soul,' writes the marquise; and on the 6th of October, we read the first letter of that renewed correspondence between mother and daughter.

Madame de Grignan was travelling to Provence, while her young son, her pride and hope, was exposed to fire for the first time at the siege of Philipsbourg. The dauphin commanded in person, while Vauban's presence insured success. A host of noble volunteers thronged around the royal commander. To share the first campaign of the dauphin was an envied privilege: it was looked upon as a road to fortune, to favour; and with all these conflicting feelings in her heart, the ambitious comtesse, a loving mother at the same time, left Paris, intrusting to Madame de

Sévigné the task of informing her of the earliest news from Philipsbourg.

The Chevalier de Grignan remained at the Hôtel de Carnavalet to keep our marquise company. He was devoted to his sister-in-law, to his young nephew, and Madame de Sévigné found in him one who shared all her feelings; or at least, for this would be saying too much, one who could understand them all. 'The more you know the chevalier,' writes she to her daughter, 'the more you esteem and love him.'

The letters of Madame de Grignan to her mother evidently showed too clearly the state of her heart, torn by fears for her son's safety. Henceforth no news is more interesting, or more sought after by that tender correspondent than all that appertains to the siege of Philipsbourg. Madame de Sévigné assures her daughter of the 'more than usual precautions Vauban has taken to preserve the life of the besiegers;' and she tells her that were she in Paris she would see that all the women 'who have in "*that boat*" their husbands, their sons, their brothers, their cousins, or whatever else you like, do not cease to live, to eat, to sleep, to go and come, to talk, to reason, and to hope soon to see the return the object of their solicitude.'

Madame de Grignan's room at the Hôtel de Carnavalet had been occupied on her departure by Mademoiselle de Méri. What a contrast for the mar-

quise when entering it to find it darkened and occupied by an invalid! 'Alas, that dear comtesse, how she lightened up, and filled every place!' The only room Madame de Sévigné could seek with pleasure was that of the chevalier. 'We think so much alike,' writes she, 'our sorrows, our interests are so similar, that it would need violence not to see one another.'

It was by an effort of imagination only that Madame de Sévigné could picture to herself her grandson as a young warrior. 'You say truly,' exclaims she in one of her letters to Madame de Grignan, 'that this is a strange month of October: I have never spent such a one. In the preceding month of October our marquis had no greater care than having missed a hare or a partridge, always, of course, by some accident. But we do not live during this one. I have my sorrows, and I have yours in addition to them.'

Madame de Sévigné knew it was useless to send Madame de Grignan any of that gossip which usually diverted her. Even great events must become uninteresting. 'You do not listen to me,' says she after a few words on the affairs of England; 'you are thinking only of your child.' The little child that had been so timid in his early infancy, who had grown up silent and reserved, had no such appearance when he found himself at the post of honour. His first campaign may be termed brilliant. 'Up to now,'

writes his grandmother, 'your child is perfectly well, and doing wonders; he sees and hears the cannons fired around him without any emotion. . . . He gives his uncle an account of the siege as would a veteran officer. He is liked by everybody; he has often the honour of dining with Monseigneur, who speaks to him, and makes him hold the "candlestick." Monsieur de Beauvilliers treats him like his son, and so does St.-Pouanges.'

Never perhaps has the tenderness of Madame de Sévigné shown itself more ingenious than on this occasion: her letters are models of discerning tact and tender intelligence; she never says too much or too little; she does not shun the subject that is nearest to her daughter's heart, but she does not dwell on it with any morbid affectation. Then with what intelligence does she bring forward the opinion of others! 'It is the opinion of Monsieur de la Fayette;' or 'Madame de Lavardin has heard.' She seems to be saying—see, this is the impression of strangers; how tranquillizing it is! Let your mind be more easy, my child.' How well she selects all those happy little episodes that can render the suspense more endurable to the mother! how, without any exaggeration, she extols all the budding merit and valour of the young marquis! 'If you were here,' writes she, 'you would see, like us, that our little man is formed for every-

thing. . . . He writes gaily, and in a free spirit. . . . What joy you will have, my dear comtesse, when we shall write to you that Philipsbourg is taken and your son is safe!' In this way, gently, without effort, she forces her daughter to abandon her gloomy forebodings, and look to a bright and certain future she presents so naturally to her eyes as an inevitable event.

At last came the happy day (and it was not long deferred, Philipsbourg capitulating on the 30th of October) when Madame de Sévigné wrote to Provence the joyful and eagerly expected tidings. 'Philipsbourg is taken, my dear child; and your son is safe. I have but to turn this in twenty different ways, for I do not intend changing my theme. . . . Sleep, then, my beloved; sleep on my word. If you are eager for despair, as we used to say formerly, seek another cause for it, for God has given you back your dear son. We are transported with joy.'

Madame de Sévigné could now allow herself to think of nothing but the honour and benefit it was for the Marquis de Grignan to have taken part, before his seventeenth birthday, in so important an expedition. Every danger was supposed to be over, and it was regarded as certain that there would be no further siege.

While Madame de Grignan in Provence, and

Madame de Sévigné in Paris, were resting in perfect security, the young marquis was experiencing a miraculous escape. At the short and somewhat unimportant siege of Mannheim, that had followed immediately on that of Philipsbourg, a splinter from a bomb-shell had struck the heir of the Grignans on the hip, violently wrenching the hilt of his sword; this saved him, for had he been struck a trifle higher, instead of a slight wound, a mortal one would in all probability have been the consequence. Madame de Sévigné, who had received the tidings of this escape from the little hero himself, communicates them to Madame de Grignan in the form least calculated to alarm her. The fond mother knew beforehand, that though the danger was past, the very thought of it having existed would move her daughter's heart to its core. She strives then to diminish the importance of the risk incurred, regarding it rather as a happy casualty. 'We must add this contusion to the number of good things that happen for his fortune before his seventeenth year, for it is but to-morrow he will reach that age. . . . Madame de Montchevreuil, who has lost her son, and Madame de Nesle her husband, must envy you indeed.'

On all sides came compliments to Madame de Sévigné on the manner in which the Marquis de Grignan had behaved, and the way he had received his

bruise. Madame de la Fayette declared it was a thing to be bought, if money could have purchased it. Even Madame de Maintenon, with 'an air and tone admirable,' for Madame de Sévigné gives them no meaner epithet, answered the chevalier, who was replying to her compliments that it was nothing—'Monsieur, it is better than nothing.' The king was informed of it: in fact, if we are to take Madame de Sévigné's word for it, the bruise of the Marquis de Grignan occupied both Paris and Versailles.

Madame de Grignan in leaving one child had gone to find another, and Pauline, the amiable Pauline, occupied Madame de Sévigné's mind even when, as Madame de Coulanges puts it, 'she contented herself with sleeping at the post office to be in readiness on the arrival of the couriers.' The grandmother, far more equitable and just than the mother, was anxious as to the impression Pauline would produce on her cold parent, and the manner in which she would be treated. She dreaded above all a convent or a *vocation*, of which perhaps Madame de Grignan might have hinted at while in Paris. 'You make me a charming portrait of Pauline,' writes she to Madame de Grignan; 'this is an agreeable little person, and one whom there will be no difficulty in loving. She adores you: her submission to your will, if you decide she is to leave you, causes me great pity and pain, and I admire the power

she has over herself. For my part, I should enjoy that charming little companionship, which ought to be an amusement and an occupation to you. I should make her work, read good books, not too simple ; I should reason with her, and see of what she is capable ; and I should speak to her with affection and confidence. You will never be embarrassed with that child. On the contrary, she may be useful to you. In fact, I should enjoy her, and should not inflict on myself the martyrdom, in the midst of all those with which life is filled, of robbing myself of this consolation.'

Identical nearly are the terms, because identical are the feelings, which urge Madame de Grignan to guide and cherish Pauline at fifteen, with those that had implored her to love her little child in her babyhood. The young girl was a subject of eager interest and preoccupation to Madame de Sévigné. She begs Madame de Grignan to speak to her daughter as she has often heard her speak to her son, 'and being what you represent her to me, she will profit by it, and will be to you an occupation and amusement worthy of you, and according to the laws of God and those of the world.'

We see that Madame de Sévigné did not hesitate to appeal to the highest sentiments of duty of Madame de Grignan, to impress upon her the happiness it would be to her, and the obligation she was under, to

care for and attend to the welfare of Pauline. It is strange to see a grandmother thus urging a daughter to love her child. Madame de Sévigné's partiality must of necessity have been for the young marquis, whom she had seen growing up near her; but it could not make her oblivious of the right his sister had to a place in her mother's heart and in her father's house. Madame de la Fayette is called to the rescue as it were. 'I have described her [Pauline] to Madame de la Fayette,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'and she does not believe it possible you should not attach yourself to her. She advises you to observe the bent of her mind, and to guide her according to your enlightened judgment. She approves extremely that you should converse often with her; that she should work; that she should read; that she should listen to you, and exercise her intelligence and memory.'

What could Madame de Grignan answer to such letters? yet she found it in her heart to complain of the faults of temper of Pauline, the beauty and wit of whom might at the first moment captivate her; while soon again rose in her mind those ambitious views which made her desirous to prove the necessity of a convent for redressing Pauline's disposition. Madame de Sévigné knew full well, that once removed from Grignan, the fate of her granddaughter would be sealed, and a destiny similar to that of Marie-Blanche

would be in store for her. It is this conviction which makes her such a bold champion; for in defending Pauline she does not hesitate to blame her own adored daughter. 'Pauline is then not perfect,' says she; 'all the better; you will amuse yourself in fashioning her anew. Treat her gently: the desire of pleasing you will avail more than all the scoldings.' A few days after, when Madame de Grignan had probably dwelt with more force on the faults of her little daughter, the marquise says—'But, my daughter, had you imagined that Pauline could be perfection? She is not always gentle in private. There are people much beloved, much esteemed, who have had this fault. I believe it will be easy for you to correct her; but beware of accustoming yourself to scolding and humiliating her.'

The fear of Madame de Grignan was to see remain unmarried that pretty and clever daughter: rather than such a fate for her, the mother preferred a convent. She dreaded also the expense she would be forced to incur to bring a Mademoiselle de Grignan out in the world, and Madame de Sévigné guesses and meets all these objections. She writes to her daughter —'Madame de la Fayette begs you to love Pauline: she sees clearly that this child is pretty, and she wishes, as Madame de Lavardin does also, that you should not refuse a good offer.' Then she tries to

persuade Madame de Grignan that the good offer must be forthcoming, and that simplicity will become Mademoiselle de Grignan better than anything else. 'That name is an ornament,' says she; 'and in the expense your son and his company entail, every economy is becoming in you and in this little person.'

While Madame de Sévigné was thus interfering in behalf of Pauline, the young marquis, triumphant and happy, had returned from his first campaign. He had reached Paris on the 9th of December, surprising his grandmother and uncle by arriving a day sooner than he was expected; but this did not earn him a less warm reception. Madame de Sévigné, who was out when he arrived at the Hôtel de Carnavalet, found him on her return 'gay and charming.' What pleasure to hear the 'little man' talk of his exploits, to listen to his cool and collected account of the manner in which he had received his bruise, to sympathize with him in the tenderness expressed for his 'dear mamma!' Madame de Sévigné found it an equal amusement and duty to guide by her counsels her little marquis. 'When you are here, my dearest,' writes she to Madame de Grignan, 'you speak so well to your son that there is nothing else remaining to be done but to admire you. In your absence I occupy myself with teaching him the habits of conversation, with which it is important to be well acquainted. There are things of

which he must not be ignorant. It would be ridiculous to appear surprised at certain concerns that are discussed. I am rather learned in those trifles. I also preach to him the necessity of attending to what others say, and the presence of mind for understanding and answering quickly: it is an important point in society.'

To this worldly advice, so replete with all that is needful for a young man to practise if he desires to be esteemed and sought in the world, was joined suggestions of a more serious kind. The Marquis de Grignan had none of the taste of his mother's family for books and reading. It could but be a source of regret to such women as Madame de Grignan and Madame de Sévigné, and the latter says—'We speak together [with the chevalier in the presence of the marquis] of reading, and of the extreme misfortune it is to be a prey to *ennui* or idleness; we say that it is laziness of mind which takes away the taste for good books, and even for romances. As this subject is very near to our hearts, it recurs often.'

The short life of the Marquis de Grignan was one distinguished by all good and chivalrous qualities: he was brave, he was amiable, and he left behind him an excellent reputation. The uncle that loved him so well, and was to survive him, saw him act upon those sentiments with which he had made it his task to

inspire him. 'Monsieur le Chevalier is more useful to him than you can imagine. He always tells him the best things in the world on the serious topics of honour and reputation, and he takes a care of his affairs for which you cannot thank him too much. He enters into everything; he sees to all, and wishes that the marquis should himself look after his money; that he should note down his expenses, calculate, spend nothing uselessly. It is thus he strives to imprint in his mind a disposition for order and economy, to guard him against assuming an air of grand seigneur, of "What does it signify?", of ignorance, of indifference, which is the sure road to all sorts of injustice, and finally to the hospital.' Such ideas were in perfect accordance with those of Madame de Sévigné, and with the maxims she had learnt from the good Abbé de Coulanges. She could not help saying that she saw 'much more nobleness in that education than in others.'

To none more than to the Comte and Comtesse de Grignan was such advice, such words of warning necessary. The pecuniary difficulties of the Grignans were ever increasing; and the great outlay demanded for the little captain told heavily on the already exhausted resources of his parents.

An unexpected and most welcome relief had come to them at the end of 1688, and Madame de Sévigné

found that since the gain of their lawsuit, Fortune was beginning to smile on the Grignans. The unlooked-for aid came in the shape of the Government of Avignon. This town belonged to the Popes; but Louis XIV, discontented with the conduct of Innocent XI (the reigning pontiff), who, in the affair of the Electorate of Cologne, had not acted according to the wishes of the eldest son of the Church, saw no better manner of testifying his anger than by violently seizing Avignon. It was the Marquis de la Trousse, lieutenant of the Gendarmes-Dauphins, who was intrusted with the task of putting the king's orders into execution. The success was both easy and certain. The profit of it was reaped by Monsieur de Grignan, who for the time being found his income augmented by twenty thousand francs a year. Madame de Sévigné urged that this sum should not be spent in ostentatious splendour, but employed wisely and rationally. Once this advice given, she rejoiced warmly at this fortunate stroke of Fortune.

This accession of wealth was to be followed immediately by another, equally, if not more, agreeable and desired. Monsieur de Grignan was made a Chevalier du St.-Esprit. 'The Order,' for it was that above all others, had been on her husband's account a long envied distinction by Madame de Grignan. Madame de Sévigné had the pleasure of

announcing the nomination in Provence, and this she did with all the satisfaction her tenderness could inspire in her. The promotion, or official installation, of the new chevaliers was to take place on the first day of the year 1689. Many were exonerated from appearing in person, and Madame de Sévigné, thoughtful of the outlay such another journey would entail, hoped Monsieur de Grignan would be allowed the same favour.

Seventy-four chevaliers had been named at the same time as Monsieur de Grignan; and the Order admitted of only one hundred. Naturally, many were envied, while the nomination of others was found fault with, their right to the distinction being often commented upon unfavourably. In spite of the number of chevaliers created, the king had left out some who expected and who believed it their due to receive the honour. Madame de Sévigné advised her daughter not to speak or write a single word in disparagement of any of her new colleagues; in fact, she begged her to be modest in her triumph.

Monsieur de Grignan, in his province had at least the satisfaction of not being confounded in the vast number of *Cordons bleus* who were at one moment to invade Versailles. His uncle, the Archbishop of Arles, and himself, alone of those in Provence were honoured with the distinction. 'When one thinks of those who are in despair, one must find it extremely fortunate to

have been in the memory of a master who recompenses the services rendered to him, and that one wishes to render him in the person of our children,' writes the marquise. All the friends of Madame de Sévigné, all those of the Grignans, hastened to mark the share they took in the favour granted to the Comte de Grignan. 'There are lists of names at our door such as when you gained your lawsuit. Do not think, my daughter, that for the last three months you have been in bad luck. I begin by the gain of your lawsuit; then the preservation of your son, his good and solid reputation, his bruise, the beauty of the company you have formed for him; the affair of Avignon, and the Cordon bleu.'

Madame de Sévigné, rejoicing in the prosperity of her daughter, valued it also for the sake of her young grandson. 'She cherished, she embraced, she caressed him,' for it appears 'such was his destiny;' and guiding and encouraging him, she gave herself the pleasure and amusement of taking her little marquis with her to visit her friends whom it was important should become his also. Even the shy boy, taking courage, got bold enough to go alone to Versailles. 'He behaved perfectly,' says his grandmother; 'he went to all the *levers* and all the *couchers*.' He was well received by all; in fact, 'he is the fashion,' adds Madame de Sévigné.

If Madame de Grignan was denied the satisfaction of witnessing those first steps of her son in the world and as a man, she had at least the consolation of being informed of every detail that could interest her. Nothing was omitted, and the young heir of the Grignans appears in all the importance he had in the eyes of his family.

Madame de Sévigné sometimes praised her daughter when she deserved no eulogy; but in the passage in which she alludes to the passionate attachment of Madame de Grignan for the name and house of her husband, she gives her what is her due, and she is right in saying that Madame de Grignan had every claim to be loved by her brother-in-law and all who bore her name. 'What are you not for them?' says she; 'for their name, for their family? All given up, all devoted, all ruined, all detached from your own family, except from your mother; and that, why? Why! Because you have given me all your sentiments. I wear your livery, and you love me.'

Never was any avowal more truthful; it paints admirably the state of heart of Madame de Sévigné, and shows how clearly she judged and discerned her own weakness.

CHAPTER XIII.

1688-9.

Arrival of the Queen of England in France escorted by Lauzun.—The new year begins with the reception of the Chevaliers du St.-Esprit at Versailles.—James II reaches St.-Germain.—Reception of the queen and the Prince of Wales by Louis XIV.—Contrast between the two grandsons of Henri IV.—The little marquis in Versailles.—Madame de Sévigné's advice to her daughter.—Education and management of children.—She endeavours to persuade the Bishop of Carcassonne to be generous to his nephew.

THE year 1688 did not end without an event happening which afforded ample matter for comment, and excited the curiosity and interest of all. It was no less than the arrival in France of the Queen of England, wife of James II. She came, flying from her country, with the young Prince of Wales and a few dependents, and escorted by Lauzun. He, the predestined paladin of princesses, had been intrusted by a king with the sacred persons of his wife and son. Such a trust seemed suited to one marked out for every romantic adventure, for every sudden change of fortune. Of the flight, Madame de Sévigné gives

an account which, in its dramatic simplicity, sets before us all the dangers, all the terrors of that supreme moment, and all the chivalry, the self-possession of the knight-errant. In his cloak he conceals the heir to the throne, and with the other hand leading the trembling queen, he guides her to the boat on which they were to embark. They get on board, and 'Monsieur de Lauzun at the side of the captain, to throw him overboard in case he were a traitor.' They land safely at Calais; and the queen is received there with all the respect due to her. 'They say the king is to go to meet her,' writes Madame de Sévigné; 'this is the first part of the romance. I will give you the rest shortly.'

The fate of the King of England remained in uncertainty, and for some days each well-informed person announced a different issue. The eager spectators of the serious drama were kept in suspense. Some said James was arrested; others, that he was at Calais; but all were in ignorance.

With these great changes the year 1688 closed. The Prince of Orange, the implacable enemy of France, was in London; a queen flying and deserted was on her road to seek a refuge at St.-Germain's; Louis XIV in all the glory of Versailles. The year 1689, terrible and solemn, was about to open upon Europe. The Dutch, backed by hosts of b[illegible]

and having given a king to England, might dare to contemplate the hour of revenge. To a sun had Louis XIV compared himself, and faithful to his self-chosen emblem, Fortune had destined him to rise in pale glory behind clouds which his presence dispersed, to ascend burning and triumphant to his meridian, to shine there in undisputed glory for the bright hours of the day. But the course must be pursued, and the sun that had dazzled Europe must set amidst clouds red with gore and black with coming storms. Those clouds were gathering on the horizon when the year 1689 began.

The year opened at Versailles with the gorgeous ceremony of the reception of the chevaliers. Several ladies of the distinction, as we have said, had been prevented from being present in person. Notwithstanding this, it was a goodly gathering that assembled in the noble halls on the 1st of January. Monsieur de Grignan had been to Versailles, and it is his daughter an eye-witness that Madame de Sévigné had. 'All the troop was magnificent. 'Monsieur de la Trousse amongst the rest of the chevaliers on this occasion well deserved the qualification. It consisted of a cloak richly embroidered with *fleurs de lys* surmounted by rams in silver, and sprinkled with flames. On the left side, the great star with

seven points, and the dove in the centre. Over this great cloak was a small one of cloth of silver, of which material was made the rest of the costume. The stockings were of white silk, and the shoes of white velvet.

Madame de Sévigné a few days after the ceremony called with the young Marquis de Grignan on Monsieur de la Trousse, who for their gratification, and no doubt for his own also, dressed himself anew in his splendid attire of the reception. 'The cloak,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'gives an idea of the royal majesty;' and she could not but regret that the fine figure of her son-in-law had not shone in a similar vesture.

One word to recall that Henri III was the founder of the Order of the St.-Esprit may not perhaps be out of place. He had established it in remembrance of the strange, and, in his eyes, providential circumstance of having on a Whit Sunday received the news of his accession to the throne of Poland, and afterwards to that of France.

One of the obligations of the Chevaliers du St.-Esprit, part of the ceremony, in fact, had been to receive in public the Holy Sacrament. What profanations this duty occasioned can be easily conceived. Madame de Sévigné, as a Janséniste, had in horror the 'fréquente communion' of those unworthy of it,

against which the great apostles of Port-Royal had lifted their voice. She could not accustom herself to regard an act she considered sacred beyond all others as a condescension to opinion. 'Did I tell you,' writes she to Madame de Grignan, 'that the king has abolished the Communion from the ceremony? I have wished long ago that it might be so, and I compare the merit of this action to that which forbids duels.'

The court then was all ablaze with cordons bleus when the King of England arrived in France to seek the hospitality of his royal cousin. It was on the Jour des Rois (Twelfth Day) that James II reached St.-Germain. 'It will really be to-day,' writes the marquise to Bussy, 'the feast of kings; and it will be as agreeable to him who protects and gives refuge, as sad for him who needs it.'

Louis XIV found in his grandeur and pride the motives to inspire him with the truest generosity. It flattered his feelings to be thus the protector of the king of a great realm, and to dispense his regal bounties to such noble fugitives. To receive the dethroned queen he had gone in shining splendour, 'with all his house, and a hundred coaches with six horses.' As soon as he saw the coach of the Prince of Wales he alighted from his without allowing the little child, who they say is as beautiful as an angel, to do the same. He kissed him tenderly.' On the queen her-

self he bestowed every mark of distinguished favour; and by his care she found herself at St.-Germain 'served like the queen.'

The King and Queen of England, who were to make the palace bestowed on them by the generosity of their kinsman their permanent residence, were at first regarded as before long destined to 'have their own again.' But the turn of affairs in England soon suggested the necessity of settling all things for the possibility of a lengthened sojourn.

The impression produced by the Queen of England was most favourable. Madame de Sévigné describes her as 'thin, and with eyes that have wept, but large and dark; a fine complexion, somewhat pale; the mouth large, with fine teeth; a handsome figure, and a great deal of intelligence.' 'The presence of those noble hosts was enough,' says she, 'to occupy for a long time all the public conversation;' and when one is at all acquainted with the complicated and difficult routine that ruled the court, it is easy to imagine the stir, the agitation, the appearance of two royal personages must have provoked. The question of precedence alone, of who was to be seated and who to remain standing—of what would be the relative position of a dauphine of France and a queen of England dethroned—was sufficient to throw the minds of the courtiers into violent perturbation.

The sad and despicable James had excited very different feelings from those his wife called forth. 'He has courage,' writes Madame de Sévigné, who on this occasion is but the echo of public opinion, 'but his mind is ordinary, and he relates all that has happened in England with an insensibility which inspires the same feeling towards him.'

Louis XIV, who did not find in the dauphine, his daughter-in-law, those qualities most necessary to a princess destined to hold a great court, and who was always obliged to carry back his imagination to the times of his mother to find a model of what a real queen ought to say and do when surrounded by her ladies and courtiers, bestowed on the wife of James II eulogies destined to stimulate the zeal of the indifferent Bavarian dauphine. 'This is what a queen ought to be,' spoke Louis XIV, 'in mind and in body, holding her court with dignity.' The fallen majesty had not received from all those marks of deference and homage that were lavished on her by the monarch and the first princes of his blood. 'Some of our ladies,' writes Madame de Sévigné, 'who wish to have the airs of princesses, had not kissed the dress of the queen; a few of the duchesses intended to do as much. The king has censured it severely. Now it is her feet they kiss.'

Strange and telling sight: the two grandsons of

Henri IV found themselves thus brought together under such circumstances: one, in the height of a godlike power that his grandsire would have shunned, for above all he was a man, 'though a king, a victor, and a graybeard;'* the other, still more unlike in all things to that chivalrous ancestor. Louis XIV was a king with the buskin of a pagan divinity; James II, a monarch with the robe of a Jesuit; Henri IV, a sovereign with a drawn sword, and a waving white plume on his helmet. Between the three the choice cannot be doubtful.

But all the receptions given to the King and Queen of England could not have, either in Madame de Sévigné's eyes or in those of her daughter, the interest possessed by a short visit of their little marquis to Versailles. To think of him there, 'alone,' was a subject that threw all others in the shade. And when 'the little man' returns to Paris, it is to meet with new amusements, to be invited to a masquerade given by the young Duc de Chartres. Everywhere he was well received, and his pleasing face and amiable manners, together with his name, assured him a cordial reception.

Much as Madame de Grignan saw to praise in this dear object of her ambition, it did not console her for his indifference to knowledge. It is Madame de

* Words of Henri IV.

Sévigné who there again stands between her grandson and the exaggerated severities of her daughter. 'We must not weary him, or constrain him,' says she; '. . . you must have a little patience and not distress yourself about this. He would be too perfect if he were fond of reading.' It does not seem that once in the course of those many years is Madame de Sévigné ever at fault in the advice she gives to her daughter. But what she says to her on the education and guidance of her children is particularly admirable. It is mixed with so much that calls forth commendation, that it loses perhaps some of the importance it deserves.

We think that were a short manual compiled, consisting simply of collected fragments alluding to the management of the children of Madame de Grignan in infancy and in youth, it would present a whole as instructive, inspiring, and suggestive as the much praised (with justice) letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son. It would be shorter; but 'brevity being the soul of wit' this could be no great fault. If fewer words are used, if the sermon is not divided and subdivided, the text is developed with a force and truth that leave nothing behind it. There is hardly a question appertaining to the rearing of children that is not touched upon, and mastered in a few lines.

Madame de Sévigné knew that when she proffered

counsel about Pauline, it was not received with the same ready ear as when she spoke of the marquis. It needed but a word' to justify 'the little man;' the strongest are demanded to defend the absent granddaughter. Her daughter's temper formed the basis of Madame de Grignan's complaints; they recurred again and again in spite of what Madame de Sévigné could say. She however never acknowledges herself defeated, and she comes back on the question with greater force. 'You surprise me about Pauline. Ah, my daughter, keep her near you; do not believe a convent could counteract an education, or her ideas about religion, for our sisters know as little of that as of anything else.' The hints of Madame de Sévigné as to the reasons that ought to render Madame de Grignan indulgent for her daughter's imperfections of temper had not been accepted or understood. It is no longer an allusion that Madame de Sévigné has recourse to; she proceeds without hesitation, and says to her daughter—'It is true that I feel a great inclination for her [Pauline]. Is it because she has a likeness to you in what you are the least perfect?'

When Pauline, become Madame de Simiane, read those letters of her grandmother, with what gratitude must she not have been penetrated for her! But for this tender guardian the *vocation* that began to appear, under well advised suggestions no doubt, would have

been pursued, and her doom sealed. Later Madame de Grignan was to have the reputation of adoring her daughter, but at that time well might Madame de Sévigné write—'It seems to me I love her, and that you do not love her enough.'

Madame de Sévigné, who had given such shining proofs of tenderness for her children, found herself entitled to speak to Madame de Grignan as she did; and her example might indeed be offered to all parents. She was conscious of it, and with all the humility of her nature, she however rendered herself justice on this point. Sending to Monsieur de Grignan a 'St.-Esprit' which she offered him as a present, she writes —'These are strange gifts: a ribbon, a little pigeon, a trifle; it is the widow's mite. It is true that I have given myself up entirely: I had contemplated all the consequences of it; but it did not shake my resolution, and I said—"Well then, if they fail me, if they ruin me, God will perhaps of this ingratitude form the groundwork of my salvation;" and with this thought I have never repented what I have done, and your friendship and tenderness make my life too happy.'

Madame de Sévigné suffered keenly on seeing, after she had done so much, the embarrassment of her daughter, and that when she was rendered powerless to aid her. She could but strive to inspire some of her sentiments in Monsieur de Grignan's brother, the

Bishop of Carcassonné, and the Coadjutor of Arles. Both possessed great revenues, which might enable them to help their richer and at the same time poorer brother; but they preferred spending vast sums in adding to and improving the Château de Grignan, and giving it a more regal aspect at the time its masters were in positive need. Madame de Sévigné corresponded with Monsieur de Carcassonne, and gives of a letter she wrote to him the following account, which makes us deeply regret that the original has not been preserved:—'I have written an answer to Monsieur de Carcassonne, which the chevalier has much approved, and calls a masterpiece. . . . I tell him that order only can make him rich, and that with it he can meet every call, those of duty and those of pleasure, as well as obey the feelings of his heart for his nephew, of whom he must be the support. That with order all can be accomplished, and without it, nothing. Then I am seized with an enthusiasm for you, for Monsieur de Grignan, for your son, for your house, for that name which we must uphold, and to which I am inseparably attached. I add, that my greatest grief is being no longer able to help you, but that I intrust him with doing so; that I pray God to transfer to his heart all my sentiments, in order to augment those he has already. In a word, my daughter, this letter is better

put together, though written impetuously. In reading it, Monsieur le Chevalier's eyes reddened; and as for me, I wounded myself so deeply with my own sword that I wept with all my heart.'

These efforts of the marquise were not to prove useless, and on the occasion of his nephew's marriage, Monsieur de Carcassonne was to come forward in the manner she wished.

CHAPTER XIV.

1689.

Madame de Sévigné's life in Paris.—She witnesses a representation of 'Esther' at St.-Cyr.—She looks forward to a journey to Brittany.—Sévigné is chosen to command the Arrière Ban in Brittany.—Military preparations in France.—James II starts for Ireland.—The young marquis goes to join his company.—Madame de Sévigné's useless warnings on the subject of expense.—She receives the adieus of her friends.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, engrossed as she was with the affairs of the Grignans, found time to pursue in Paris the usual course of her quiet amusements. Her friends would not allow her to remain confined in the Hôtel de Carnavelet. One day she dined with Madame de la Fayette, another she supped at the Coulanges' with the Duchesse de Chaulnes. The gay little man was suffering from an attack of gout. 'He screams, they carry him on his back, he sees people, he suffers, he does not sleep at all; but all this is done as if it were a joke: he cannot even suffer seriously,' writes Madame de Sévigné.

Madame de Coulanges and the marquise were contemplating at that time being admitted to a representation of 'Esther' at St.-Cyr. This institution, for

the education of two hundred and fifty ladies of noble birth, had been founded in 1686 by Louis XIV at the instigation of Madame de Maintenon, and to be one of the chosen spectators of the performance of Racine's tragedy, by the young ladies was a much wished-for privilege. The King and Queen of England, and all the people of a 'profound wisdom,' had been invited by Madame de Maintenon to see the performance of her 'little girls.' Monsieur de Pomponne, who had received the distinction of being asked to one of the first representations of of the piece, had given a glowing description of it to Madame de Sévigné. 'The king had found it admirable; Monsieur le Prince had wept.' Madame de Maintenon had spoken of Madame de Sévigné as one who ought to be added to the number of chosen spectators. 'Madame de Maintenon said of me better than I deserve. I shall go to St.-Cyr on Tuesday or Saturday.' Madame de Coulanges, who was to return there with the marquise, found herself, through her intimacy with Madame de Maintenon, amongst the most favoured, and she twice saw what so many others could not succeed in witnessing once.

'We went on Saturday,' writes Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Grignan, 'Madame de Coulanges, Madame de Bagnols, the Abbé Têtu, and I. We found our places kept. An officer said to Madame de Cou-

langes, that Madame de Maintenon had ordered that a seat for her should be reserved near herself. You see what an honour. "You, madame," said he to me, "you may make your choice." I placed myself with Madame de Bagnols on the second row behind the duchesses. The Maréchal de Bellefonds came by choice to sit on my right, and in front were Mesdames d'Auvergne, de Coislin, and de Sully. We listened to the tragedy, the maréchal and I, with an attention that was noticed; as were also certain praises in a low voice, and in their proper places, which were perhaps not to be found under the "fontanges" [head-dress] of all the ladies. I cannot tell you the charm of this piece; it is a thing not easily imagined, and which can never be imitated: it is a harmony between the music, verses, hymns, personages, so perfect and so complete, that there remains nothing to be desired. The young ladies, who perform the parts of kings and other personages, are made on purpose for them. One is attentive, and feels no other regret than seeing the end of so admirable a piece. All in it is simple, all is innocent, all is sublime and touching; all the hymns suiting the words, that are taken from the Psalms and the Book of Wisdom appropriate to the subject, and of a beauty not easily listened to without tears. The measure of approbation given to this piece is that of discernment and attention. I was charmed, and the

maréchal also, who quitted his place to go and tell the king how much he was gratified, and that he was seated near a lady well worthy to have seen "Esther." The king came near our places, and after having turned, addressed himself to me, and said—"Madame, I make no doubt you are satisfied;" and I, without surprise, answered—"Sire, I am charmed; what I feel is above words." The king said to me—"Racine has great talent." I answered—"Sire, he has a great deal; but in truth these young persons have a great deal also: they enter into the subject as if they had never done anything else." He said—"Ah, as to that, it is true." And then his majesty went away, leaving me an object of envy. As I was nearly the only new comer, he was pleased to see my sincere admiration, quiet and reserved. Monsieur le Prince and Madame la Princesse came to speak to me. Madame de Maintenon passed like lightning; she was going with the king. I answered all, for I was fortunate. We returned by the light of torches. I supped with Madame de Coulanges, to whom the king had spoken with an air of being at home which gave him a most amiable gentleness. In the evening I saw Monsieur le Chevalier, related to him ingenuously all my good fortune, not wishing to make a secret of it, like certain persons, without knowing why. He was pleased with it, and it is over. I am assured he did not find in me either

a stupid vanity or the transport of a "bourgeoise;" ask him.'

The admirable tragedy of Racine, which Madame de Sévigné praises with her usual penetrating judgment, had been acted by the young 'demoiselles of St.-Cyr.' The dear pupils of Madame de Maintenon spoke her eulogies and the praise of the monarch under the transparent names of Ahasuerus and Esther. Racine himself had instructed those young actresses, who performed their parts with a talent that astonished all, and their zeal was such that behind the scenes they threw themselves on their knees, repeating the 'Veni Creator.' The cherished niece of Madame de Maintenon, Madame de Caylus, was the only married woman who shared in the representation. She had been brought up at St.-Cyr, and acted admirably. When one of the performers failed for some reason, she took her place, and thus at different times she embodied nearly all the parts. It was thought 'she did too well.'

Madame de Sévigné all the more enjoyed the refined amusements, and the intercourse of her friends, because she was looking forward to another journey to Brittany, where she would be entirely deprived of them. She was to start with the Duchesse de Chaulnes after Easter, and she even feared that she would not find Sévigné at the Rochers. He had been

chosen as commander by the 'Arrière Ban' of Brittany, called together on a rumour of a descent of the Prince of Orange on the coast. It was a most honourable distinction, but most unwelcome to the man to whom it was proffered, as it brought with it ruinous expenses and very little advantage. Madame de Sévigné well foresaw that on this occasion at least the Arrière Ban would not be required, while Sévigné was sick of service, and would have much preferred remaining undisturbed and unsought in his château.

Bussy could not understand the sentiments of either Madame de Sévigné or her son on this subject, and he tried to prove to her the real value of the distinction which had been conferred on Monsieur de Sévigné. She agreed with him, but still regretted it. All France was up and in alarm: the powerful league of Augsburg menaced her on all her frontiers, while the sea and the north, south, and east had to be guarded.

Louis XIV was arming James II, that he might try to recover his lost kingdom: ships and frigates, money, and arms for ten thousand men were bestowed by one monarch on the other. Louis, giving his own armour to James, wished him as God-speed, that he might never see him again. It was thus the King of England at Versailles went to be defeated by the King of England at Whitehall.

Alas! those wars and those strifes did not concern

only the destiny of kings. Young men, sons, and husbands were leaving their homes to fulfil their duty. The time had come for the little marquis; he must go to put himself at the head of his company. The hour of fighting was not yet at hand, but all knew it could not long be delayed. 'My dear child,' writes the marquise to Madame de Grignan, 'keep up your heart about this journey; as yet it must receive no other name.' Then profiting by the fact that the mother's heart is moved for one child, she brings forward the other, holding her up as a consolation if she were allowed to become one:—'Let us speak a little of Pauline, that great little girl, so pretty, so amiable. I should never have imagined that her temper was violent. I believed her all honey; but, my child, be not discouraged: she has intelligence, she loves you; she loves herself, she wishes to please. This is enough to correct herself; and I assure you it is not in childhood we amend: it is when we have attained the age of reason; and pride, so bad for many things, is admirable for this purpose. Try then to reason with her, without scolding, without humiliating her, for it revolts —and I answer for it, you will form a little wonder. Make of this work an affair of honour and conscience.'

Madame de Sévigné, who persevered in calling the departure of her grandson a journey, could not how-

ever help being moved when the hour came for him to start. He left on the 6th of March, 'gay and contented, occupied with his retinue, and laughing at his uncle and grandmother.' Captain though he was, the young marquis was accompanied by his tutor until he should join the officers of the regiment of his uncle. 'All the young men follow the good example of our child. I advise you to take courage like the others, and believe that God will preserve him to your affection.'

Madame de Sévigné had now but a few days more to remain in Paris, and the Chevalier de Grignan, ill as he was, resolved to make a desperate attempt to join his regiment; but his strength was not equal to his courage, and he had ultimately to renounce his intention.

One by one all the inhabitants of the Hôtel de Carnavalet were being dispersed, and Madame de Sévigné could not in spite of that think with indifference of leaving her residence, which was as it were still warm with the presence of Madame de Grignan: her portraits were everywhere, and there might sometimes be the pleasing illusion that she was about to appear. In Brittany the conviction of being separated came home with greater force to Madame de Sévigné's mind, which explains to us her 'little sadness,' as she termed what she experienced at this 'separation on a separation.'

Madame de Grignan, after leaving Paris, had been spending the winter at Aix, and she was looking forward to return to Grignan, where at least the necessity for continual expenses was not so great. But economy came too late, the gap was too deep for small restrictions to fill it.

Madame de Sévigné, who praised and encouraged her daughter when she knew her to be amiable and conciliating in her little court, was at a loss what to say when came the question of extravagance. 'You are polite; you are adored and respected; you do not despise your courtiers; you behave to perfection. Ah, how I like these manners! how noble they are! and how mean it would be to despise people who think but of honouring you! How I approve of this conduct! I am certain it charms Monsieur de Grignan. You have felt, and will feel ever more, the happiness of having friends. Those of Provence may be useful also: at all events there is no little enemy.'

It was rather late in the day to begin those conciliating manners in Provence, where had been too often seen 'that disdainful countenance,' of which Madame de Sévigné speaks. Monsieur de Grignan, who united to the highest bearing the most urbane manners, had suffered from and feared his wife's arrogance. It had been canvassed between him and his mother-in-law in Paris, and perhaps a few words of gentle warning had

produced their effect. But the other warning, so often, so seriously, so pressingly spoken, had remained as of yore unheeded. Debts were accumulating, heavier every year, and ruin, complete and terrible, was imminent. 'I answer nothing as to your calculations. . . There are no limits: two spendthrifts together; one desiring everything, the other always approving; it is enough to sink the world; and was it not the world, the grandeur and power of your house. I have no words to say what I feel; my heart is too full. But what are you going to do? I do not at all understand it. On what subsist? On what found the present and future? What is to be done upon reaching a certain point? We were calculating your revenue the other day: it is large. You ought to have lived on your salary, and have left your rents to pay your arrears. . . You have received many small sums, without counting Avignon; that ought to have helped you.' Such thoughts, such reflections caused more than one sleepless night to the marquise. For her, all that went on in that brilliant and needy house was a kind of miracle. She neither understood the ways nor the means of it; her strict probity reprobated what was taking place, and she writes to her daughter about 'that miraculous conduct which makes her fly without wings. For me, my dear child, I fall flat, and when I have nothing, I have nothing.'

It was with this violent anxiety in her heart that the marquise left Paris. She knew well what 'those small sums' she alluded to had been, and why she was no longer in a position to rescue her daughter from such dire peril. She kept to herself the secret of her cares, and received the adieus of her faithful and attached friends. She parted with Madame de la Fayette; the Duchesse du Lude, Madame de Verneuil, and Madame de Coulanges came to pay her a last visit; and Madame de Vins, Madame de Lavardin, the Marquise d'Uxelles, Madame de Mouci, and Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucauld came to wish her a prosperous journey. Well might she say that her heart was sad at so many leave-takings, and that it needed the beauty of budding spring and the bright lanes of Normandy to solace her heart.

CHAPTER XV.

1689.

The Duchesse de Chaulnes and party reach Chaulnes.—Madame de Sévigné's description of it.—They arrive at Rennes.—Madame de Sévigné is met by her son and daughter-in-law.—Return to the Rochers with her children.—Existence of the two ladies there.—Madame de Grignan goes to Avignon.—Madame de Sévigné on the Sacrament.—The Chevalier de Grignan arrives at Grignan.—Occupation of the hours of solitude of Madame de Sévigné.—She and her daughter-in-law accept an invitation to Rennes.—Monsieur de Chaulnes nominated ambassador to Rome.—Sévigné is disappointed in not being named to the Great Deputation.—Moderation and justice of the marquise.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ was profiting, as we have said, by a friendly offer of the Duchesse de Chaulnes; and with her and another Breton lady, Madame de Kerman, was going to Rennes. To do this they took a roundabout route, intending to rest for a few days at Chaulnes, in Picardy, where they arrived on the 16th of April, after a most agreeable two days' journey. 'We were,' says Madame de Sévigné, 'in the best carriage, with the best horses, the largest retinue, travelling vans, numerous outriders, and every convenience that can be imagined. We slept at Pont, in

a charming little inn, and the next day here. . . . This house is fine and of a noble appearance, though unfurnished, and the gardens neglected. The green hardly shows itself as yet; not a single nightingale. . . . But it is easy to imagine the beauty of the walks: all is regular and magnificent. A spacious flower garden in front; bowling-greens opposite each wing; a large fountain in the flower garden, two in the bowling-greens, another lost in a field admirably named the "Solitaire"; a fine country; handsome apartments, an agreeable view, though flat. . . . But above all, a duchesse so kind, so amiable, so obliging to me, that if you love me, as I do not the least doubt, you must necessarily feel extremely obliged for all the tokens of friendship I receive from her.'

The peaceful influence of the country was soon experienced by Madame de Sévigné: it was the means best calculated to quiet the agitation of her heart, and to give her new strength both in body and mind. She remained ten days at Chaulnes, enjoying perfect liberty, and walking alone in the fine alleys. She called it rehearsing for the Rochers.

From Chaulnes the progress was continued, always with the same facility and ease. Madame de Sévigné, whose imagination took pleasure in all the new sights that she saw, was pleased with Rouen, with Caen, which she called the 'prettiest town, the gayest, in the

most charming situation.' She was enchanted with the banks of the Seine, and in fact with the whole country, which she was visiting for the first time; at least she called it so, in spite of a former journey in Normandy, when she was too young to take notice.

The three distinguished travellers arrived at Rennes on the 10th of May, and were met before entering the town by a crowd that came to welcome the 'gouvernante.' Among the number that had to be embraced, Madame de Sévigné espied her son. 'We kissed each other with a good heart,' writes she; 'his little wife was delighted to see me.' It was three years since mother and son had met, and they did so as they always had done, with the sincerest joy. Sévigné produced his usual happy impression. 'My son is always amiable,' writes the marquise; 'his person is charming: an excellent health, lively and full of wit.' And the young marquise is rendered full justice to also. 'I have found her very lively, very pretty, still loving me.' But the word of praise, of affection, of respect, for the Grignans is not omitted. 'He [Sévigné] spoke to me a great deal about you, and of your son, whom he loves. He has met with people that have spoken of him in a manner that has astonished and moved him; for he has, like us, the idea of a child, and all he hears is solid and serious.' The daughter-in-law is not forgotten

either, and Madame de Grignan's good will for her is propitiated in these terms:—'She is charmed with you, and has a weakness for Monsieur de Grignan [whom she had never seen] that diverts us.'

At Rennes, Madame de Sévigné resided with the Marquise de Marbeuf. She had excused herself with the Chaulnes, preferring the less noisy hospitality of her old friend. Madame de Sévigné heartily appreciated her reception by the marquise, and says that she is lodged 'in a fine room furnished with handsome red velvet, and ornamented as in Paris. . . . A good woman who is delighted to have me; a good friend who has sentiments that would satisfy you.'

Monsieur and Madame de Chaulnes would not allow Madame de Sévigné to hasten to the Rochers as she had intended. They proved their sincere affection and real desire to profit by her presence, in forgetting for her sake differences that had separated them from the Marquise de Marbeuf. They called on Madame de Sévigné, and even invited Madame de Marbeuf to one of their splendid repasts. The duc was occupied with nothing but the soldiery. 'It is always reviews, always drums, always soldiers, regiments, and officers.'

Madame de Sévigné, who had never found any pleasure in those provincial amusements, was delighted when the departure of Monsieur and Madame de Chaulnes from Rennes to another part of their government

allowed her to follow her inclination, fully shared by her children, of repairing to the Rochers. The life which began there was quiet, but happy. 'Time passes like lightning,' writes the marquise, 'though it brings no pleasures, and even with all our torments it carries us away.' Sévigné was to his mother an indefatigable reader; and when he was forced to assume the command of the 'Arrière Ban,' and leave his mother and wife alone at the Rochers for some time, his presence was missed by both. But the young marquise, sincerely attached to Madame de Sévigné, amiable and intelligent, did her best to make amends for her husband's absence.

The existence led by the two ladies is thus minutely described by Madame de Sévigné to her daughter:— 'We lead such a regulated life, that it is nearly impossible to be otherwise than well. We rise at eight, and very often I go until nine, when mass rings, to breathe the fresh air of these woods. After mass we dress, we say good morning to each other, we return to pick orange flowers, we dine, and till five we work or we read. Since we have no longer my son with us, I read, to spare the weak chest of his wife. At five I leave her and repair to those smiling alleys. I have a footman who follows me; I take books; I vary the aim of my walks. A volume of devotion, a volume of history, sometimes one sometimes the

other occupies me. I dream a little of God, of His providence. I think of the future. At last, about eight o'clock, I hear a bell; it is for supper. I am sometimes rather far from the house. I find the marquise in her fine flower garden; we are company to one another. We sup as dusk falls; our people sup. I return with her to the Place Coulanges, in the midst of those orange trees. . . . I prefer this life a thousand times to that of Rennes.'

Madame de Grignan often chose to speak of herself as buried in Provence, but in truth her existence was a constant whirl of dissipation, and she was unacquainted with the genuine country life Madame de Sévigné described at the time she was spending such peaceful and monotonous days in Brittany. The handsome comtesse had left her busy solitude of Grignan to repair to Avignon, and there enjoy her sovereignty for the time being. It was a precarious but much valued possession, but the ostentation it entailed was even more splendid than at Aix. 'What a difference, my dear comtesse,' exclaims Madame de Sévigné, 'between the life you lead at Avignon, all brilliant and dissipated, and that we lead here, all simple and solitary! It is in the order of things, that is, in the order of God, and I cannot believe, whatever inclination you may have for retirement, that those honours and respect from people of distinction and merit can

displease you. If you said so, I could hardly credit it. In truth, it is unnatural not to feel sometimes pleased to fill a place above others.'

The account Madame de Grignan had given her mother of Avignon and its magnificence, of the splendid processions, of the old churches and palaces, all that caused Madame de Sévigné to regret deeply that this fine town was under the sway of her son-in-law but for a fixed period. The pope was dying, and there was no doubt his successor would receive as a first gift from the King of France the noble city that delighted the Grignans, and with them the inhabitants of the Rochers. But there were some obligations appertaining to those 'places above others,' that Madame de Sévigné could but ill brook; one of them was the frequent necessity, imposed by custom, for Madame de Grignan to take the Communion in public. The mother, who knew her daughter's heart, could but speak strongly against this deference to custom, the hypocrisy of which, as the daughter of the free-spoken Chantal she abhorred, and as the disciple of the fathers of Port-Royal she repudiated. Few thought as she did in the seventeenth century, and the example of blending the practice of every frailty with that of every outward mark of devotion, had come from high. Nevertheless, Madame de Sévigné writes to her daughter—'I cannot believe you are more religious than

St.-Louis, who required the sacrament but five times a year.'

Returned to Grignan from Avignon, the comtesse arrived in time to receive her brother-in-law, the Chevalier de Grignan. The voice of all his friends, of his doctors, of Monsieur de Louvois even, sent him to seek relief for his sufferings, instead of attempting to join the army. The Chevalier de la Gloire, as it had been the pleasure of his family to turn this valiant scion of their race, was laid low by a terrible hand, and he that was burning to face the enemy had to be carried to his room. It was a painful sight, and Madame de Sévigné could not read an account of it without the tears starting to her eyes. She measured also what a loss it was for her grandson to be deprived of the presence of one who was regarded as his natural guide and protector. It was not willingly a Grignan could abandon the hope of serving the heir of the name. 'They loved,' as Madame de Grignan wrote to her mother, 'the least drop of their blood, under whatever appearance it presented itself;' and how much more powerful was that feeling when it concerned one, the first by right, brave and lovable at the same time! It was for the young marquis that the family gathered together under that proud roof; consulted, planned, hoped, and executed.

The time passed at the Rochers with less outward

grandeur, but with fewer cares. The young marquise had no greater desire than to please and win the affection of her mother-in-law, keep her company, and yet not intrude in those hours of liberty Madame de Sévigné loved to reserve to herself. They were consecrated to a daily visit to Grignan; for while in body she walked the alleys of the Rochers, or rested at Place Madame, in mind she was sitting on one of those elevated *terrasses*, where her daughter repaired, surrounded by her family and visitors. There she saw Pauline, and spoke a good word as usual in her favour. 'I am delighted to be the cause of your kindness to her, and to dispose you to be more lenient for her.' And when Madame de Grignan finds a word of praise for her daughter, 'Did I not tell you the wish to please you would make her perfect? It was necessary not to treat her roughly, and you see what gentleness has done. I am delighted at this.'

The solitude of Madame de Sévigné and the young marquise was interrupted by a pressing invitation from the Chaulnes, who begged the ladies to visit them at Rennes, where the duc and duchesse had come on purpose to see Sévigné at the head of his 'noblesse.' With so much to support their invitation, there was no possibility of a denial, and the pair abandoned the Rochers for the ever-ready hospitality of the Marquise de Marbeuf. Madame de Sévigné imagined she was

leaving her solitude for a few days only, but her 'good governors,' as she called them, had decided otherwise. They asked her, in a manner that prevented refusal, to accompany them on a little journey, they intended taking as far as Auray. Let us hear Madame de Sévigné herself speak of it. Madame de Chaulnes had made the request, and Madame de Sévigné relates her answer :—'"Madame, you have no need of me ; it is a kindness. . . . I shall return to my solitude, of which I feel a veritable need." Madame de Chaulnes on this moves back rather coldly. All at once my imagination takes a turn, and I think—"What! do I refuse people to whom I owe a thousand civilities and kindnesses? I make use of them and their carriage when it suits me, and I refuse to accompany them on a little expedition when they may perhaps be desirous to have me. They might choose, and it is with timidity they make me the request." . . . All this passed rapidly through my mind, and I saw that I was not doing right. I approached Madame de Chaulnes, and said, "Madame, I thought at first of myself only; . . . but would it be possible that you wished it for yourself, and that it would cause you the slightest pleasure?" She reddened, and said to me with an air of truth, "Ah, you may imagine it!" "It is enough, madame; more is not needed. I assure you I will go with you." '

The invitation so affectionately given was thus gracefully accepted, and the marquise started for Auray: nothing, she writes to Madame de Grignan, could equal the care and kindness of the Duchesse de Chaulnes; the duc was amiable and gay. Madame de Chaulnes did not cease repeating to the marquise, that the fair comtesse would be delighted at her having taken her away from the Rochers; for it was in vain Madame de Sévigné protested her genuine attachment to the old château. Others, judging by their own feelings no doubt, could not but think that she preferred the noisy Rennes to her own quiet alleys.

It was during this short expedition, and in such agreeable society, that the Governor of Brittany received from Versailles the letters that were to send him as ambassador to Rome. It was the third time this extraordinary honour had been conferred upon him. The occasion was of vital importance: it was to aid in the nomination of a pope favourable to the interests of France. 'Our dear Holy Father,' as Madame de Sévigné called Innocent XI, who had left Avignon to her daughter, was at the point of death. The choice of Louvois and the king falling on Monsieur de Chaulnes, he was imperiously ordered to leave all other business and hasten to his new destination. 'The government of Brittany is, in his absence, to be given to the Maréchal d'Estrées,' writes Madame de

Sévigné. 'His journey will not last long: he will return as soon as the election is over; and his majesty will meet the extraordinary expenses he must incur.' The honour was great, and yet the Duchesse de Chaulnes saw it fall on her husband with tears of regret. She could think of nothing but the dangers, and the evil consequences of such a journey to a man no longer young; while the brilliancy of such an embassy could not dazzle her eyes. All had passed with extreme rapidity. The Duc de Chaulnes had started almost immediately for Versailles; the duchesse had spent a night at the Rochers, in vain pressing Madame de Sévigné to return with her to Paris; the farewells had been spoken, and not without tears on the sides of the two attached friends. Madame de Sévigné speaks of the Duchesse de Chaulnes as a woman full of sensibility; and her own sentiments are by this time well known to the kind reader.

Monsieur de Chaulnes' departure had a bearing in a double way on the affairs of Madame de Sévigné, though in truth it appeared to have little connection with them. First, he was hurrying as it were to dispossess the Grignans of their 'Comtat of Avignon;' 'that blessed Comtat,' a favour of Providence. Then there was a negotiation in which Monsieur de Chaulnes had a more immediate influence. Sévigné, who prized so little the distinctions to be obtained by courtiers, was

not indifferent to those which came to him as a Breton nobleman living on his lands and taking an interest in the welfare of his province. He was aspiring in this year of 1689 to be named for the 'Great Deputation,' as it was called, to which was intrusted the honour of presenting to the king the gift of the Etats. In bygone days the governor had named, with no court interference, the nobleman he selected as ambassador on this occasion; but this right had gone with many others, and the selection remained in the hands of the sovereign, who however listened to a suggestion from the governor.

'If it is the festival of the noblesse of Brittany, and not that of courtiers, the choice must undoubtedly fall on my son,' wrote Madame de Sévigné, who had taken this affair very much to heart. The Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes had promised to make it their own business, and the marquise did not doubt that after so many warm promises the necessary words had been spoken to the king by Monsieur de Chaulnes. Madame de Chaulnes, who was at Versailles during the absence of her husband, wrote to Madame de Sévigné a letter full of protestations of friendship, notwithstanding which a strange silence about the deputation followed this first letter. Complications had sprung up. The Marquis de Lavardin, by the intimacy that existed between

their mothers, was more than well disposed towards Sévigné. It was he, the Lieutenant-General of Brittany, and not the Maréchal d'Estrées, who had been appointed to hold the Etats. It was to him the Duc de Chaulnes had intrusted this affair of the deputation, and when all was going on smoothly the plans had been fashioned anew, and the Maréchal d'Estrées had, on complaining to the king, been invested with all the functions of a governor. He was at least equally well disposed towards Sévigné, but time had been lost, and the zeal of all the friends of Madame de Sévigné, of Madame de la Fayette, of Madame de Lavardin, was exerted in vain. It came out also that Monsieur de Chaulnes had not thought to say one word to the king about the deputation. The duchesse had failed to speak with those who might be useful, and a courtier, Cavoie, obtained the envied post for his brother-in-law, the Marquis de Coëtlogon. Never perhaps does Madame de Sévigné appear more to advantage than on this occasion. She had desired ardently that her son should receive this distinction, and she had every reason to believe herself abandoned by the Chaulnes after so many unsolicited offers of service.

It would have been natural to exclaim, at least in her letters to her daughter, in bitter recrimination, to contrast what had been promised with

what had been performed. She does no such thing, and speaking to one with whom she is at perfect liberty, she puts forward everything with a moderation as creditable to her heart as to her intelligence. She owns herself in the dark on many points, but she speaks of the Chaulnes as of the same friends who a month before were loading her with tokens of consideration. Madame de Grignan, desirous to aid in the success of her brother, and induced by all that had been written to her, had received the Duc de Chaulnes at Grignan on his way to Rome, entertaining him with all the magnificence and respect worthy of her name and position and of his exalted post. Her mother begs her not regret it; and yet she does not strive to conceal her pain and disappointment; but she bears it with admirable equanimity. On hearing what had happened, Madame de Grignan felt it more violently, and wrote to her mother in strong terms as to the conduct of the Chaulnes. Madame de Sévigné continues to defend them. 'I am resolved not to complain of them; it would be acting a bad part. All is hidden and confused by the journey to Rome. We feel no kind of humiliation in public, and my heart justifies them.'

CHAPTER XVI.

1689.

Friendship of the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulnes for Madame de Sévigné.—The duchesse, by means of Madame de la Fayette, secretly offers to lend some money to Madame de Sévigné.—Madame de Sévigné's reflections on a word in Madame de la Fayette's letter.—Affection of the young marquise for her mother-in-law.—Life at the Rochers and at Grignan.—Sympathy of Madame de Sévigné and her son.—Anxieties about the marquis.

THE heart of Madame de Sévigné guided her aright, as it had ever done, for the Chaulnes had in reality striven their utmost for her. The duc had found it impossible to say one word about Brittany to the king, who was wholly occupied with Rome but failing that he had neglected nothing; and at the very moment Madame de Grignan was questioning the sincerity of Madame de Chaulnes' friendship for her mother, the duchesse was busy arranging a little conspiracy (in which she played the most generous and yet obscure part) destined to bring Madame de Sévigné back to Paris. A letter worthy of preservation among the records of true friendship was written by Madame de

la Fayette, which exhibits three women in a light so considerate and generous, that we are rejoiced to think that they are not fictitious persons, but lived, and lived according to their noble instincts. After a few words respecting the Deputation, Madame de la Fayette adds:—'My style will be short, but this is not the question of the moment. The question, my friend, is, that you must not spend the winter in Brittany. You are old, the Rochers are full of woods, colds and coughs will fall upon you, you will be dull, your intelligence will suffer from it and decline; all this is sure, and all the things in the world are nothing compared to what I say. Do not speak to me of money or debts: I close your mouth on this. ' Monsieur de Sévigné gives you his carriage; you come to Malicorne, where you find the horses and carriage of Monsieur de Chaulnes. You are in Paris; you go to the Hôtel de Chaulnes: your house is not ready; you have no horses; it is only for a time, and at leisure you establish yourself. Let us come to the fact: you pay something to Monsieur de Sévigné; you have servants here: put these together, it amounts to a good sum . . . . You will say, "But I owe money, and I shall pay with time." Reckon that you will find here one thousand écus, with which you pay what presses most; they are lent to you without interest, and you will repay them at your leisure. . . . No

arguments on this, no useless words, no letters lost; whatever you may write to me I shall not even read. In a word, you must come, or renounce my friendship and that of Madame de Chaulnes and Madame de Lavardin. We shall give up a friend who wishes to age and die without an effort; there is meanness in such conduct: you must come as soon as it is fine.'

Well might Madame de Sévigné say this letter was of such 'vivacity and affection that it pleased' her. She knew not as yet who was the generous friend who thus wished to come to her aid; and decided though she was not to avail herself of such an offer, her gratitude was not the less sincere. She wrote an answer to Madame de la Fayette, giving her word 'not to be ill, not to age.' Madame de Chaulnes was so desirous to make amends for having failed in the affair of the Deputation, and her affection was so earnest, that for what she meant to do she desired no thanks, and her name was not to appear. She had arranged to deposit the money in the hands of the faithful Beaulieu, Madame de Sévigné's butler, who had remained in Paris; and it was Madame de la Fayette who revealed the secret. Madame de Sévigné writing to her daughter said she had not been tempted by this offer, for such conduct would have compelled her to clear herself a thousand times more than all the bailiffs in the world. 'I say a truth on the misfortune of having

debts: those who press us are pressing; and those who do not press us are more pressing still.'

Madame de Sévigné felt a lively gratification in seeing how right she had been in her conviction of Madame de Chaulnes' sincerity. 'It is difficult,' says she, 'not to have a good opinion of the heart of a person so natural, and who thinks of me with so much persistence and friendship. . . . My friends in Paris are well satisfied with the proceedings of this duchesse. This is the way of the world, and how we sometimes judge people without hearing their justification!'

Madame de Grignan abandoned her habitual reserve to praise the behaviour of her mother's friends, and she appreciated it as it deserved. She felt also some little regret that Madame de Sevigné had not availed herself of such advances, but the marquise found that 'it would have been doing little honour to her first resolution to change it so easily. In truth, my daughter, there was nothing to do in this case but what I have done; that is, feel their kindness, and have a warm gratitude for it.'

There was one expression amid so many of friendship that had struck Madame de Sévigné, and which moved Madame de Grignan; it was, 'you are old.' 'Though I do not forget that truth,' writes the marquise, 'yet I own it surprised me, for as yet I feel no decline that reminds me of it. Nevertheless, I often

make calculations and reflections, and I find the conditions of life rather hard. It seems to me I have been dragged, in spite of myself, to this fatal point when I must bear old age. I see it; I have reached it; and at least I would desire not to go further, not to advance on that road of infirmities, of sufferings, of loss of memory, of disfigurements, which are ready to outrage me; and I hear a voice that says to me—"You must walk on, or if you will not, you must die," an extremity against which Nature revolts. This is the fate of those who advance a little too far; but a return to the will of God, and to that universal law to which we are condemned, puts reason in its place, and makes us have patience. Have it also, my beloved child, and let not your too tender affection cause you to shed tears which your reason must reprove.'

What words are these! and what must have been the woman who wrote and thought thus? Where find nobler thoughts, purer feelings, and a more touching resignation to the decrees of Providence? Madame de Sévigné from those serious and austere reflections knew also how to derive consolation, and one that she treasured most was the conviction that according to the laws of Nature she must go before her daughter. 'It is,' writes she, 'what consoles me for all the laborious progress of old age;' and when Madame de

Grignan affectionately wrote to her mother that she desired never to see the end of the many years she wished for her, the answer is—'We are very far from agreeing in our desires.'

We have quoted before those lines of Madame de Sévigné where she says that if she were to live but a hundred years she would become faultless, and the necessity she saw for people as they advanced in life to perfect themselves: it seems to us that the practice of this doctrine is visible in all she writes. There is in the letters of the winter of her life a still higher vein of inspiration: they are more eloquent, they are full of reflections and thoughts that suggest in others a strain of elevated meditation.

Madame de Sévigné's disposition of mind during those last years of her life, when she was enjoying the most robust health, and was recalled by no exterior circumstance to the fact of advancing in that path of which the end is sure, recalls to us 'the veillée d'armes' of the ancient knights. It seems that she voluntarily represented to herself the danger she was to encounter, and by prayer and by meditation, and by pacing alone the solitary aisles of the deserted church, she grappled in the silence of her heart with the weaknesses of our nature. In one of her letters of this year, the marquise wrote to her daughter—'We must endeavour to accustom our imagination

to the worst that can happen;" and on this principle she acted.

Madame de Sévigné in the early days of October resided alone in those 'Rochers' her friends so dreaded for her. Her son and his wife had gone to Rennes on business, and when that was over Madame de Sévigné imagined that the amusements of the town would keep them away a little longer from their quiet retreat. She mistook on this occasion the tender affection she had inspired in her daughter-in-law; and when least expecting it, she was surprised and pleased by the return of the young marquise. She came alone, saying to Madame de Sévigné—'Everybody tormented me at Rennes on my desire to return to the Rochers; but, madame, when I reminded them it was to be near you, they understood that I was right.' Madame de Sévigné was truly glad to see again her daughter-in-law, for she discerned clearly, she writes—'It is with as good a heart as a good grace that she had made this expedition.'

Sévigné had been retained by the Maréchal d'Estrées, who, having known him well in Paris, was happy to speak to a man with whom he might talk of subjects familiar to both. So the quiet companionship of the two ladies of the Rochers was resumed. The young marquise was worthy of such society as that of her mother-in-law, not only because of the upright

feelings of her heart, but because of her intelligence and taste for knowledge. Madame de Sévigné was sometimes astonished at finding in one who had never quitted the province a 'mind so opened that one would think she had passed her life in the world.' Her happy disposition was still somewhat dormant when Madame de Sévigné first knew her son's wife after their marriage, and she had profited no doubt during those four years by the advice and aid of her husband, whose intelligence and wit were carefully cultivated, and which, as Madame de Sévigné said, 'awakened hers.'

The young Marquise de Sévigné was not the only person in Brittany who knew how to appreciate and profit by the presence of one of a merit so rare. Friends on a visit to the marquis at the Rochers were alike delighted and charmed with the mother of their host. One, especially, a Monsieur de Guébriac, whom Madame de Sévigné had counted amongst the visitors to be dreaded, and she meant by that, those that were agreeable—This Monsieur de Guébriac more than reciprocated the favourable appreciation of Madame de Sévigné, and after he left the Rochers he continued the intercourse by letters, and it is of one of these that the marquise writes to her daughter——'I would have sent it to you because his style is natural and agreeable, were it not that he praises me too much. In good

faith my humility could not tolerate it. He is so surprised to have met with a woman who has a few qualities, some principles, and who in her youth had some few charms, that it would appear he had spent his life in a cut-throat place, always agitated by passions, and without faith or law.' This is how Madame de Sévigné summed up his life; and her words have the impress of no false modesty: she writes simply what she feels naturally.

Contented as Madame de Sévigné had reason to be with her daughter-in-law, the return of her son to the Rochers was not the less a most agreeable event. It was he particularly who so managed that spending the winter at the Rochers became for Madame de Sévigné, as she writes, 'the easiest thing in the world.' He collected around his mother a society that amused without disturbing her. It was his presence that animated that 'comfortable room, with a good fire, and two tables for play;' and when the visitors were gone —'It is still better,' adds the marquise, 'for then we read, which is what we prefer to everything.'

If Madame de Sévigné exaggerated a little what she felt about spending so many cold winter months remote from her circle of friends, and in a somewhat severe retreat; if she banished from her heart all regrets, only to look at what was pleasing and satisfactory in her life, her merit is but greater. Compare such an

existence with that led by Madame de Grignan—harassed by debts, persecuted by creditors who came from Paris to claim their due. One woman who had supplied Madame de Grignan with the handsome and rich dresses she wore at Versailles, and the becoming 'doublets' of the young marquis, travelled all the way from Paris to Grignan, in the hope of being paid at least a part of the sum that was due to her, and she accomplished her journey without result. Such apparitions at the Rochers would have banished peace from Madame de Sévigné's heart. At Grignan they were regarded as a torment, but other expenses were not abated, and from nothing, as Madame de Sévigné remarks, continued to spring resources for everything except to pay debts.

Madame de Sévigné had all the Abbé de Coulanges' ideas about justice; and the small debts she had contracted against her will, and only when forced by imperious circumstances, rendered any retrenchment easy if by such means she could pay all she owed. The satisfaction this feeling was to her was troubled however by the news she now received from Provence. The affairs of the Grignans were in such a state that the mother's heart was torn with distress in reading the letters of her daughter. On all sides that proud house found itself overwhelmed. Already sunk in debt, the demands for the young marquis created new

and terrible embarrassments. The Régiment de Grignan had been bought from the Chevalier de Grignan for his nephew. He was a colonel at eighteen; but the amount necessary to complete the purchase of the regiment, and to give to the young marquis the money and the equipment he must have, whence was it to come? It was a cry of distress that went from Provence to the Rochers, and it moved not only Madame de Sévigné, but the kind brother, who had never grudged any preference his mother had shown for his handsome sister. 'Ah, my daughter,' writes the marquise, 'how tame are wishes on such occasions! and how useless it is telling you that if I still had, as I have had, a sum in ready money, it would soon be yours! . . . Your brother has appeared sensible to your sorrow; and I am sure he would do his duty better than your rich prelates if the times were as they used to be; that is, if one could contract a loan. He wishes to speak to you himself, and tell you his feelings on what concerns you.'

Sévigné, whom every letter we have shows to have been the worthy son of one who was all generosity and tenderness, writes to his often-favoured sister:— 'Here is the maternal uncle, my dearest little sister, who writes to you himself, and who assures you, with the greatest sincerity, that if he had the fortune he ought to have, that is, if lands were fortune and not

simply mere songs and illusions, you would see by material proofs how much he interests himself in what regards you. But, my fair sister, I am surrounded by people that I could put in prison if I wished; who beg me every day to do so; who are lodged in houses that belong to me; who say they pray God for me; but who at the same time assure me that as for money, I must not give it a thought.'

It would have been well if the affluent archbishops and bishops of the Grignan family could have thought the same. Sévigné also, who was not blinded by false family pride, did not find reason to rejoice at the early advancement of his nephew. In that regiment of eleven companies he saw too heavy a responsibility for one so young, and he foresaw all the perils it had for one so inexperienced. Were he indulgent, were he severe, either behaviour would call forth censure, and Sévigné, who knew the service well, could but say—'I pity him; he has advanced too young, and that advancement is his misfortune.'

If the 'Lion with the paws crossed,' as Madame de Sévigné and her daughter called the gallant chevalier when disabled by gout, had not been compelled to remain inactive, he would have guarded the marquis in all those difficulties; but Madame de Sévigné felt 'they were not lucky,' neither she nor the Grignans.

CHAPTER XVII.

1690.

Plans of Madame de Sévigné.—Marriage of Monsieur de la Fayette.—Reception by the bride.—Madame de Sévigné intercedes for her grandson.—Carnival at the Rochers.—Reflections on the taste for amusements in the seventeenth century.—Bussy continues to solicit at court.—Death of the Dauphine—Influence of Madame de Sévigné in the household of her daughter.—Death of Beaulieu.—Return of James II to France.—Death of the Maréchal Schomberg.—Madame de Sévigné with the approval of her 'doctors' determines to go to Grignan.

'We shall soon see the end of our sac of one thousand francs,' writes the marquise to her daughter, referring to the rapidity with which the new year—the date of which seemed strange to both—would pass. Already Madame de Grignan in Provence, and the friends of Madame de Sévigné in Paris, were speaking to her of leaving the Rochers, although she had decided remaining there till the autumn. Kind and considerate, grateful to the true friends who wished her back in Paris, Madame de Sévigné begged her daughter to keep as a secret between themselves the intention she had, if Madame de Grignan returned

not to Paris, to join her at Grignan. It was this prospect which was to shorten the intervening months.

If Madame de Sévigné demanded from Madame de la Fayette, from Madame de Lavardin, and others with whom she stood on intimate terms, interest and affection for her grandson, she did not in her turn remain indifferent to their children, and their children's prosperity. Madame de Sévigné was at the Rochers when Madame de la Fayette had the satisfaction of seeing her son contract a most advantageous marriage, and the marquise rejoiced in it for her friend's sake, not only when writing to Madame de la Fayette, but when writing to her daughter. She praises La Fayette, and thinks the bride, Mademoiselle de Marillac, and her family could not have done better than select him; and then she gives the following description of the young comtesse in her wedding splendour :—

'Madame de Coulanges informs me that the new Madame de la Fayette looked magnificently on her bed,* in a fine house. The room was enlivened by the fleurs-de-lys of a fine tapestry belonging to the Garde des Sceaux ;† the bed decorated with an old cloak of the Order,‡ and a very fine tapestry with the arms

* It was the custom for brides, the day after their marriage, to receive the compliments of friends while on their bed, when they were dressed in state.

† Keeper of the Seals—the great-grandfather of the bride.

‡ Probably the order of St.-Michel.

ornamented with *bâtons* of marshals of France, and the collar of the Order; a great many mirrors, chandeliers according to the present fashion; a great many servants in liveries; fine clothes for the little bride: in everything such a good air in the house and in the new family, that our Madame de la Fayette must be perfectly satisfied in having procured for her son such a great and honourable alliance.'

Madame de Grignan had in her youth little appreciated the friend of her mother, and had even often written of her in terms that hurt Madame de Sévigné. Things now however had changed, for the marquise writes to her daughter, alluding to Madame de la Fayette—'She is a woman both amiable and estimable, and one whom you loved as soon as you had time to be with her, and to acquaint yourself with her intelligence and good sense: the more one knows her the more one becomes attached to her.'

The end of the tender connection between those two distinguished women was near at hand; it may be said that the intercourse which had been so delightful to both during that long period had already terminated. Madame de Sévigné was to see Madame de la Fayette again, but only for a few months, the last of that lingering life which care had alone preserved amidst so many sufferings.

Madame de Grignan, from what we can collect

from Madame de Sévigné's letters—and in the absence of her answers a too positive judgment must be guarded against—appears to have been a most capricious mother; at times indulgent, at others indifferent. Even for the marquis, on whom all the mother's preference rested, Madame de Sévigné is sometimes forced to plead. The young colonel was soliciting to be allowed to make a journey to Paris from Keiserloutre, where he was in winter quarters. His request was not readily granted by Madame de Grignan, and it is as usual the kind grandmother who gently interferes, and always with her same perfect tact. 'There was also,' writes she to Madame de Grignan, 'a letter from the marquis, which appeared to us too pretty. My son and my daughter-in-law in reading it felt inclined to embrace him; and above all they desired to see him receive your permission to go to Paris; for we do not think it possible to refuse him. His style is natural, young, without art; rather repeating itself by the great eagerness to obtain what he asks. All his little reasons arranged without exaggeration. . . . That wish, so just and so natural, to come and show himself as a colonel at eighteen; and all this so touchingly subservient to what it will please you to ordain, that it made us shed tears of affection and tenderness for that poor little boy: to us it appeared the most eloquent thing in the world.'

It is difficult to fancy it is for the cherished heir that Madame de Sévigné is thus pleading. Already she had expressed some little surprise that after the alarm of Philipsbourg the little hero had not been called to Grignan. She had put the question several times to her daughter, and apparently without its being answered.

Madame de Sévigné at the Rochers found ready listeners with whom to talk, not only of the marquis, but of Pauline. All that she heard of her granddaughter warmed her interest in her: she extolled the young girl's taste for knowledge and reading, contrasting it perhaps with the absence of all such inclination in her brother, in order to try and make the balance weigh more justly on her side. Sévigné also, from letters alone, had a great fancy for his niece, and all this was taken advantage of to attach the mother to her daughter. 'We see,' writes the marquise, 'a little imagination which shines, which suffices for everything, and which, with the graces of her pretty person, never goes wrong. . . . My son is in love with her, he pictures of her to himself an idea preferable to the greatest beauties.' And Sévigné, in the same letter, in his name and that of his wife, conjures his sister to send them a portrait of Pauline. We must not forget that even at this time the destiny of Pauline was still undecided, and that

the question of sending her for a short time to a convent was not entirely abandoned. Such praises of her child could not but contribute powerfully to throw for ever into the shade those plans, and to persuade Madame de Grignan that the singular merit of her little daughter must be her best dower.

The young religieuse of Grignan, as Marie-Blanche was called, remained after so many years still tenderly present in the heart of Madame de Sévigné. Perhaps thinking a great deal of Pauline, made her yearn with still greater regret for the little child she had reared so carefully, and whose infant graces had so delighted her. 'I am answering my dear little D'Adhémar with a sincere tenderness,' writes she to Madame de Grignan. 'The poor child, how happy she is if she is contented! I suppose it is so; but you understand me.' What a reproach! It was meant also as a warning, and in that sense at least it served.

Pauline had been at Grignan the soul and inspiration of the amusements of the Carnival: at the Rochers the days allotted to rejoicings had been enlivened also by the care of the young marquise, and Madame de Sévigné was agreeably surprised by a masquerade. 'We passed into the dining-room,' writes she, 'and found it brilliantly lighted, and my daughter-in-law masked in the midst of her domestics and ours, also in masquerade. Those who hold the basins for washing,

those who give the napkins, all the officers, all the valets: it was a troop of more than thirty, so amusingly got up, that surprise being added to the sight, it caused an outcry, a laugh, a confusion that enlivened greatly our supper, for we did not know who served us. After supper they all danced: they had musicians, and went through all the passepieds, all the minuets, all the courantes of villagers. . . . At last midnight struck, and we are in Lent.'

Does it not seem that there is something pleasant in that right good will with which all the inhabitants of that quiet country house entered into the fun—no other word can express so perfectly what we mean? The more we know of the manners of the seventeenth century, the more we are struck with our poverty in the shape of entertainment. We have more work and less play, but with what profit? The rivals of those great pioneers of every kind, that throw such a dazzling brilliancy on the period we are alluding to, are yet to come; and if we are more morose, we are not more clever, nor more brave, nor more learned. Garrick affirmed, that to be a really great actor it was necessary to be able to represent with equal force every part, from the most tragic to the most comic. We venture to say that what is good for the theatre would be equally good for the world, and that the versatility of that strong race of men

and women was their chief power and attraction. There was an emulation for every acquirement; for the most futile as for the most serious.

There was no disgrace in entering in or promoting schemes of pleasures; and the mode of existence of governors of provinces alone is such a contrast to the poor hospitality the most bountiful in our days dispense, that in that respect at least we are as very pigmies. Twice a day, and every day, the Chaulnes, the Grignans, the d'Estrées spread their opened and magnificent tables. Sports began early, and finished late. There was a faculty for doing a great deal more than the bulk of our generation could accomplish. Society had calls and claims that would be found in our days intolerable; though that incessant 'bracing-up' of body and mind was not perhaps without salutary effect. Without carrying consequences too far, or wishing to return to certain extremities most justly regarded as irksome, yet that lack of interest in the brighter business of life is extremely to be regretted.

After these reflections the name of Bussy comes naturally to us as a complete impersonation of the accomplished nobleman of the seventeenth century. During the time Madame de Sévigné was at the Rochers, he had gone to Paris with his daughter, Madame de Coligny—Madame de Coligny no longer

however, for one of the conditions of an amicable arrangement between her and her obnoxious husband, La Rivière, had been that she must no longer bear the name of Coligny. Her first husband's father died in time to permit her to effect a change without much humiliation; and taking the name that would have been rightfully borne by the Marquis de Coligny had he lived, she became the Comtesse de Dalet.

Age—he was turned seventy—had not subdued the devouring ambition of Bussy, or his hopes to obtain some command; and while protesting himself persuaded of the refusal his offers of service would receive, he nevertheless went to Versailles with better hopes than he would avow. Failing in his desire to be employed in the army, Bussy tried to make use of another of his qualifications, and in a letter, perfectly worded, and replete with well-administered flattery, he begged permission of Louis XIV to write the life of that monarch. What Bussy called being favourably received, was an indefinite adjournment given with an acquiescence; and at Bussy's time of life to be adjourned was to be refused. He did not choose to pretend having so understood the king's reply, but Madame de Sévigné saw through his philosophical ostentation, and sympathizing with his grief, forced him to own that he had in truth felt some little disappointment. In accounting by an attack of gout for

a short delay in answering his cousin, he shows that depression of spirit had a good deal to do with it, by saying that his sufferings deprived him of 'the cheerfulness and wit' he wishes to have when writing to Madame de Sévigné.

An event happened at this time in France, which, however, passed almost unnoticed, and called forth little regret. The dauphine, the same princess whose arrival but nine short years before had occupied and charmed every one, she whose intelligence and affability could not be praised sufficiently, whose ugliness became pleasing, passed from this world unmourned. She had propitiated neither the king nor her husband; she neither helped the fortunes nor served the amusements of the courtiers. Her health had been declining for years, and the sufferings she had complained of had called forth little belief or attention. At last, however, it proved that she had just reason for complaining, and in the month of April, 1690, she expired, after imploring the king's pardon for her little deference to his wishes, and having blessed her three infant boys. Speaking of her and her children, Madame de Sévigné says—'I do not know who will make her oraison funèbre; but for my part I see only three points in it—Monsieur le Duc de Bourgogne, Monsieur le Duc d'Anjou, Monsieur le Duc de Berri [the three sons of the dauphine].'

The general conviction was that so envied a position would soon be again filled, and that another dauphine would counterbalance the effective queen, Madame de Maintenon. Walking in his father's footsteps, however, the dauphin, had he become king, would have submitted France to such another thraldom, and Mademoiselle Choin would have taken the chair of Madame de Maintenon, and succeeded her in the respect of a court and nation.

The dauphine had been little considered, and all her faults had been magnified, perhaps because she lacked those outward charms that often, and often with injustice, redeem other imperfections. But so it is, beauty calls forth indulgence. Madame de Sévigné felt this influence more than others; and the handsome face of Madame de Grignan had certainly contributed in attracting towards her the marked preference of her mother.

The capacity for business of Madame de Grignan was real and solid, and the marquise praising it says —'When a handsome and amiable woman has received this gift of heaven, as you have, it is a marvel. I own it; one would permit her sometimes not to be so clever; others, more indulgent, would pardon even excessive and useless expenses in favour of beauty, and of the noise youth and the great world make.' Madame de Sévigné felt how forgiving she had often

been, and how lenient to the fair face she alluded to; but those caprices, that haughty and impatient tone, excused and tolerated in the days of Madame de Grignan's triumphant youth, she continued when those charms that conquered forgiveness for all were declining.

Mademoiselle de Martillac, who seems to have taken in part the place of Montgobert, though she also remained with Madame de Grignan, had much to suffer from the temper of one who in others excused so little such imperfections; and it was Madame de Sévigné who, as usual, was called upon to restore peace and tranquillity. She inquired more than once of her daughter if she did not see her mother's heart by her side, and the image became true by the influence she exerted from afar on that troubled household. 'The poor Martillac is in despair,' writes she. . . . You must reason with her, for to see that poor creature, so brilliant formerly, languish and dying of sadness by your side, believing that having loved her once, you have changed, that you would be happy to see her leave you, is a state unbearable. Would you believe that I have known this state well? I was unjust; but still such errors kill.' And then she implores a kind word for Mademoiselle de Martillac: —'You inflict the wounds, find also the remedies.' After this appeal for the dependent, Madame de

Sévigné tries to speak lightly of the sorrows of Pauline; but one sees they move her deeply. 'Ah, my deâr little one,' exclaims she, apostrophizing her granddaughter, 'how I wish I were there to quiet you, and calm your mind!' Then speaking to Madame de Grignan—'These little afflictions do nothing but heat the blood, and trouble the joy of her youth. It seems to me you are unkind; you find pleasure in seeing them languish and torment themselves. Console them; it is not easy to bear the thought of not being loved by you. Believe me in this. I kiss my dear Pauline; I love this little person; treat her gently: there are dispositions to be gained by that only. I shall write to Martillac, I cannot fancy her in affliction; restore joy in all the hearts; it depends on you.'

Though Madame de Grignan is always congratulated for understanding well how to order and manage, she never gave very tangible proofs of it. She had intrigued admirably when there was a question of acquiring Mademoiselle de Grignan's fortune; she had done wonders in the defence of their lawsuit; but when it came to arranging her son's expenses, of putting order in his affairs, she did not prove so efficient. The recklessness and waste that had cost the Grignans their once large fortune, seems to have been continued in regard to their son. Madame de Sévigné

saw all this with regret, and writing to Monsieur du Plessis, who had been the tutor of her grandson, and whose affection and respect she had secured, returning it with considerate kindness, she says to him—'The marquis would have been very happy if you had given him counsel. All has been in confusion; money has been lavishly thrown away, and, as you say, he has not a good appearance this winter. . . . It comes that all this is badly managed.' And when the marquis, without any one to guide him, and with a position forcing him to spend much, asked for supplies of money, Madame de Grignan was surprised, and it is Madame de Sévigné who, always just and always equitable, writes to the mother:—'My dearest, I believe that your son is in need of what he asks you for: the difficulty is to be able to give it him. Your position is an ocean in which I drown myself. . . . When I compare my little affairs with yours, it seems I am looking through a microscope, and I believe myself rich, and think no more of myself.'

In truth we believe it is hardly possible to find a greater example of unselfishness than Madame de Sévigné: the manner in which she thinks of others; the sincerity with which she feels for them; the sentiments of affection she inspired in all that surrounded her; and that she returned even where the most humble was concerned; all this, and every action of

her life, shows her in a light that must win for her the veneration of all well-regulated hearts.

We have seen her gentle consideration for such as Mademoiselle de Montgobert and Mademoiselle de Martillac: if they, the dependents of Madame de Grignan, loved and respected Madame de Sévigné, her own household had even warmer sentiments. It is instructive to contrast what Madame de Sévigné writes on the death of her faithful major-domo Beaulieu, with the established ideas that menials were despised, and treated like inferior beings in the 'ancien régime.' This is how the last moments of Beaulieu are described by Madame de Sévigné:—'There is being enacted at our Hôtel de Carnavalet a scene, pitiable indeed, and very sad for me: it is my poor Beaulieu. I think him dead by this time; but Saturday, the 24th of June, he suffered all that can be borne. . . . The poor fellow is resigned: he prays to God, and implores His mercy; then he speaks of his dear mistress that he would fain have seen once more, and rendered her some further services. He recommends his wife and son to me: the big tears fall from his eyes, and from mine also, for I have not strength to bear this image, and the state of a man so worthy of my affection, so faithful, so deserving of my confidence, so attached to me. . . . Monsieur de Carcassonne, Mademoiselle de Méri,

the Abbé Bigorre, Corbinelli, have been attentive and charitable to him above what you can imagine; but who surpasses them all is the good Madame Poirier:* she does not leave that afflicted couple, and takes care of Hélène,† who is nearly dead with grief. She supports her; she writes to me in her name; she takes care of my affairs. . . . I am writing to thank her, and to beg her to continue; but I conjure you very tenderly to write her one line, to tell her you thank her, and that in giving me so much pleasure she gives the same to you. . . . So that she may know that her charity is not wasted, even in this world.'

We trust we have not dwelt too long on so uninteresting an event; but we must confess to have been moved by the outpouring of a heart so perfect in all its parts that the like of it is hardly ever encountered.

Time was passing, and Madame de Sévigné saw rapidly approaching the moment when she would leave Brittany for Grignan. Time that, according to Madame de Grignan, works always for us, in 'bringing us back the dear ones taken from us,' was ever more fruitful of reflections to Madame de Sévigné: it was a clock, as she said, that she could not help looking at very often; though the good health she

* Wife of the Chevalier de Grignan's valet.

† Wife of Beaulieu.

enjoyed sometimes alarmed her by its very perfection. 'It does not prevent me, however,' says she, 'having those salutary thoughts which every one must have; but particularly, my dearest, when life is advanced, and when we begin not to see or read anything which does not warn us. When you are as old, you will not give me news of it, but you will remember that I was right. . . . This thought, this clock, has not changed my disposition, but solitude helps to nourish it.'

Startling indeed was the news that reached the solitude of Madame de Sévigné: victories for the arms of France; the gladsome tidings of Fleurus won by the Maréchal de Luxembourg. Her grandson's army corps had not been engaged, but the Chevalier de Pomponne, for whom after her own blood she felt an interest second to none, had distinguished himself greatly. What a double pleasure in writing to her daughter, to congratulate her on her son having run no peril; and to Monsieur de Pomponne on his having so gloriously escaped them all!

While Te Deums were being sung in the churches of Paris, James II was returning from his humiliating expedition. At the battle of the Boyne, so fatal to the unfortunate monarch, one who had been a friend of Madame de Sévigné, the Maréchal de Schomberg, had been killed by what more resembled an acci-

dent than the perils of a battle-field. The Duc de Schomberg was the only Huguenot to whom Louis XIV, in consideration of his rare military merits, had offered the privilege of remaining in France with the free, but secret, exercise of his religion. The indulgence was refused, and the Maréchal de Schomberg went to seek service with another great captain like himself, with William of Orange—William III of England. The manner in which a man so brave and distinguished had perished made Madame de Sévigné write sadly :—'This is the tragical end of this hero, badly supported by his followers, and abandoned to his miserable destiny.'

The month of August had come, and the young marquis had at last been allowed to visit Grignan. The family, happy at seeing him, happy at having a second time gained their lawsuit (for Monsieur d'Aiguebonne had appealed from the first judgment) with the same triumphant majority, were all gathered in their large and noble château, where Madame de Sévigné was pressingly invited to join them. The marquise, however, did not set out on such a journey without asking the advice of her 'doctors,' as she termed Mesdames de la Fayette and Lavardin. They fully approved of her plans, and while for fear of giving pain, she was keeping them a secret, those faithful friends were planning for her. The short

letter of Madame de la Fayette says so much in its concise form that we cannot refrain from quoting it: —'You will have seen by my letter, and that of Madame de Lavardin, that our idea was, as you did not come to Paris, you should go to Provence. It is the best thing to be done: the sun is brighter; you will have society, without speaking of Madame de Grignan, though that is not saying little; a spacious residence; a great many people; in a word, to be there is to live. I praise highly Monsieur *votre fils* for consenting to lose you for your interest. If I were disposed to write, I would compliment him. Start as soon as you can; inform us of the towns through which you will pass, and of the time, if you can; you will find our letters. I am in the most cruel and painful languor that can be imagined. There is nothing to be done but bear it, as it is the will of God. It is from my heart that I approve of your journey to Provence. I tell you so without flattery, and we thought of it, Madame de Lavardin and I, before knowing in the least that it was your intention.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

1690-91.

Madame de Sévigné bids farewell to the Rochers.—Arrives at Grignan.—Correspondence with Coulanges.—Existence of the marquise in Provence.—Her sorrow at the dangerous illness of Madame de Lavardin.—Death of Louvois.—Monsieur de Pomponne again in favour.—Ill-health of Madame de la Fayette.—Madame de Sévigné returns with her daughter to Paris.

WE may be sure that Sévigné was not the last to promote and help to carry out an undertaking which he knew must give such pleasure to his mother; and it was thus encouraged that Madame de Sévigné started on her long journey. On the 3rd of October, 1690, she bid adieu to her dear Rochers; to the house where she had come a happy bride; where her son had been born; where she had spent in solitude and sadness the first months of widowhood; where since that time she had passed many hours of pure enjoyment; where every tree and every alley spoke of her, and which she was never to behold again. She had herself looked upon this journey to Brittany as the

last she would accomplish, and she was not mistaken.

From the Rochers to Grignan was a trying journey for Madame de Sévigné; she, however, performed it in three weeks, even taking some days' rest on the way; and the 24th of the same month she quitted the Rochers found her at Grignan. She was received there by her daughter and Monsieur de Grignan with so much 'joy, affection, and gratitude,' that the poor mother thought she had not 'come soon enough or far enough.' How many years had passed since the preceding journey to Grignan! how many hopes baffled since she had admired her daughter in her little kingdom—for such it was! But on seeing Grignan, and the gorgeous improvements that had been made in it, the marquise probably understood better what had caused such a collapse in her son-in-law's fortune. 'This house is of such magnitude,' writes she to Bussy with involuntary pride, in spite of her better reason, 'and the beauty and magnificence of the furniture such that I shall some day give you a description of it.'

Bussy saw nothing to wonder at in that warm reception which had afforded so much delight to Madame de Sévigné. 'I am not in the least surprised, my dear cousin,' writes he, 'that you have been well received at Grignan. There is no one in

the world who would not be delighted to pass their life near you; added to this, you are a good mother, and as agreeable and lively as a sister might be.'

It is not from her correspondence with friends that we must glean the account of how Madame de Sévigné passed her time. From a letter she wrote on the 1st of December, 1690, to Coulanges, who was still at Rome with the Duc de Chaulnes, we see that the marquise had gone with the Grignans to Lambesc for the Etats, and that they only waited for an improvement in Madame de Grignan's health before returning to Grignan, where the 'little colonel' was expected.

Pauline had produced on her grandmother the favourable impression her heart had imagined without knowing her. It is to Coulanges that the marquise writes, 'I have found Pauline all charming, and such as you had described her to me.'

Madame de Sévigné's affection and interest for the 'perfect couple' when the wife was concerned could not be diminished either by time or by absence. Madame de Coulanges was one of the faithful correspondents of the marquise; but it was no longer the Madame de Coulanges for whom the 'Leaf' or the 'Sylphid' were the ordinary appellations. Always clever, and always witty, time had sobered an exuberance of spirits that would have been unbecoming in a woman past the prime of life. 'Madame de

Coulanges seems occupied with more solid things,' had Madame de Sévigné written to her daughter, 'and if it lasts it will give her dignity.' Madame de Coulanges herself had spoken to Madame de Sévigné of her growing taste for solitude, which surprised her. Coulanges had not followed the example of his wife; and to the end of his long career, of which very many years were still before him, he remained constant to his jovial and pleasure-seeking disposition. It was to the kind and cheerful little man that Madame de Grignan wrote some words that give pleasure, because they show her speaking with tender affection of a mother who so well deserved it. 'Yes,' writes she, 'we are together, loving and embracing one another with all our heart, and I delighted to see my mother come courageously from the end of the universe to find me. . . . There is only she in the world capable of such an undertaking. . . . You have also manifested your approval of her journey, my dear cousin; I thank you for doing so, and as a recompense you have my good wishes for your return.'

The winter passed quickly for Madame de Sévigné in a society she cherished so tenderly. The young marquis had been present at another siege, that at Nice, conducted by Catinat, and he was again serving as a volunteer. It is to be presumed that his mother had become more hardened to the thought of the perils he

might encounter, and that nothing could make her again experience those first alarms of Philipsbourg. Madame de Sévigné speaks of her grandson as 'Vago di fama' (pining for renown), and the reputation of the gallant little colonel was now quite established. When after distinguishing himself he returned to the paternal home, it was to be received with joy, and though Madame de Sévigné writes that a slight attack of fever which seized him on his return made her daughter 'beside herself,' it is not very difficult to perceive she presumed rather strongly on the sensibility of Madame de Grignan.

It wanted nothing less than the presence of her dear daughter and the hope of very soon seeing her son—for Sévigné was to come to Provence to try some baths and to spend the rest of the summer with his sister—to dispel the gloom and sadness that had fallen on Madame de Sévigné on hearing of the dangerous illness of the Marquise de Lavardin. 'I have been,' writes she to Coulanges, 'for the last ten or twelve days in such sadness that writing to you can alone divert my thoughts. The cause of it is the dangerous illness of Madame de Lavardin, the dowager, my old and intimate friend; that woman of so good and solid a mind, that illustrious widow who had gathered us all under her wing, that person of so great a merit, has fallen all at once into a sort of apoplexy;

she is drowsy, she is paralytic, she has a high fever. . . . I could not among my friends suffer a greater loss: I feel it very keenly. Madame la Duchesse de Chaulnes gives me news of her; and is also extremely afflicted; Madame de la Fayette still more so. Madame de Lavardin's merit is so recognized that everybody is as interested in her as for a public loss; judge then what it must be for her friends. . . . Adieu, my cousin; I can say no more, my heart is too full. If I had begun with this sad subject, I should not have had courage to go on.'

Madame de Sévigné was never again to meet that friend whom she so well describes; she was to behold her, but when the mind had flown, and nothing remained of the Madame de Lavardin of such brilliant and solid intelligence. The health of Madame de la Fayette, always bad, was also declining rapidly, and this sad news was a check to the happiness Madame de Sévigné would otherwise have enjoyed, surrounded as she was by her children. This stay at Grignan would have been too faultless had not anxieties from Paris thrown a cloud over it. 'My daughter is amiable, as you know,' writes the marquise to Bussy; 'she loves me extremely. Monsieur de Grignan has all the qualities which make society agreeable. Their château is very fine and very magnificent. This house has a grand appearance; the fare is excellent,

and we see a thousand people. We have spent the winter here with no other torment than seeing the master of the house ill of a fever, of which we had all the trouble in the world to cure him. On the other side, my son has come from Brittany to try some waters in this neighbourhood, but the good company we have here, and to which his presence adds greatly, does him more good than any other remedy. We are here all together. There is a young little Grignan whom you do not know, who very well maintains her place. She is sixteen, she is pretty, she has wit, and we give her still more. All this is very pleasing, and too pleasing, for I find that the days pass so quickly, and the months and the years, that for me, my dear cousin, I can no longer hold them back. Time flies, and carries me on in spite of myself. In vain I would retain it. It draws me on, and this idea causes me great fear: you guess why.'

Bussy was not to be warned by such reflections, and past the age when plans can be made with any reasonable hope of certainty, he was intriguing at Dijon with Monsieur le Prince de Condé, the Governor of Burgundy, to be named Deputy of the Noblesse in 1694, a year he was not to see. In the death of great and prosperous people he saw but reason to hope his turn would come also, and that Fortune would at last smile upon him.

The sudden end of Louvois, in the height of the most brilliant prosperity, called from Madame de Sévigné words that many a sacred orator might have wished to speak : the eloquence of the following might be equalled, but certainly it cannot be surpassed :— 'Here is then Monsieur de Louvois dead ; this great minister ; this man so important, who held so great a place ; of whom the *I*, as Monsieur Nicole said, was so extended ; who was the centre of so many things ! What affairs, what designs, what plans, what secrets, what interests to clear up ! what wars begun, what intrigues, what fine games of chess to play and win ! "Ah ! my God, give me a little time ; let me give check to the Duc de Savoie, and mate the Prince of Orange." "No, no ; you will not have a single moment." Must we reason on this strange adventure ? In truth, we must make reflections upon it in the silence of our closet."

The death of Louvois afforded Madame de Sévigné the joy of seeing Pomponne reinstated in favour and in office. Immediately Louis XIV heard of the death of Louvois, he with his own hand wrote to Pomponne, telling him to return at once and take his place in the Council. The next morning Pomponne, who had borne so manfully his disgrace, came to thank the monarch, who did not scruple to make excuses for having dismissed him formerly, and for having waited so long

before calling him back. Henceforth Pomponne was never again to see clouded the favour he enjoyed with the same modesty and equanimity he had shown in misfortune. The surprise at Versailles was immense. Twelve years had elapsed since that fatal day when the unexpected disgrace had fallen on the minister. To see him outlive the resentment of the king was the last thing expected, and when the news of it reached Provence it was received with wondering delight. 'I am anxious to know,' inquires Madame de Sévigné of Coulanges, 'what you have said of the return of Monsieur de Pomponne to the ministry. Here it has caused us a very lively satisfaction. Monsieur and Madame de Grignan, by a prophetic inspiration, had never doubted it would come to pass; but for myself, I desired it too much even to listen to them, and when Madame de Vins wrote the news to my daughter, I was so astonished and pleased that I could hardly understand what I heard.'

Monsieur de Coulanges had returned from Rome with the Duc de Chaulnes, and on his way to Paris he had paid the visit to Grignan which had been so long looked forward to by its masters.

As the number of her old friends was diminishing, Madame de Sévigné became more attached to those that remained to her. Coulanges she had known and loved all her life; and by him and by his wife the

marquise was regarded with the most tender respect. Madame de Coulanges was in Paris alone, and Madame de la Fayette more ailing every day. Madame de Sévigné, fearing the worst for her friend, offered to hasten her return on her account. 'Come to Paris for love of me, my dear friend! the very thought of it frightens me,' writes Madame de la Fayette. 'God forbid that I should disturb you in such a way; and though I ardently long for the pleasure of seeing you, it would be purchasing it too dearly if it was at your expense.'

Madame de Sévigné was pleased to think that her plans and those of her daughter made it probable that at no great distance of time they would undertake a journey to Paris. Had such not been the case, there is no doubt that, in spite of Madame de la Fayette's considerate denials, she would have returned for her sake. As it was, the last days of the year 1691 saw Madame de Sévigné and all the Grignans once more at the Hôtel de Carnavalet; and Madame de la Fayette, who when certain that Madame de Sévigné would soon be near her, had exclaimed—'Ah, my dear friend, how happy I shall be to see you! Verily, I shall cry heartily!'—shed those tears of joy, pain, and regret in the arms of one who for forty years had been dearer to her than a sister, and to whom she wrote with the sincerity of death on her lips—'Believe that you are the person in the world I have most truly loved.'

CHAPTER XIX.

1692-5.

Monsieur de Grignan is made a Chevalier of St.-Michel, and receives the collar of the St.-Esprit.—Marriage of Mademoiselle de Blois and the Duc de Chartres.—Marriage of the Duc de Maine and Mademoiselle de Charolais.—Poverty and sickness in Paris.—Madame de Sévigné's pecuniary embarrassment.—Death of Bussy.—Death of Madame de la Fayette.—Departure of Madame de Grignan for Provence.—She negotiates a marriage for her son.—Madame de Sévigné again visits her daughter.—Marriage of her grandson and Mademoiselle de St.-Amant.

THE Grignans reached Paris in time for Monsieur de Grignan to receive new marks of distinction from the king. On the 31st of December, 1692, he was made a Chevalier of St.-Michel; and on the 1st of January was invested by the king with the collar of the St.-Esprit, that had been his for four years, but which his absence had not allowed him to receive. Early in the year the new court was to witness two marriages, which even after that of Mademoiselle de Blois and Mademoiselle de Nantes, struck the oldest courtiers with wonder. To the second Mademoiselle de Blois,—the youngest daughter of Louis XIV and

Madame de Montespan, was given for a husband the first prince of the blood, one who in default of posterity to the king, and for many years a delicate child, stood next to the throne—would in fact become king of France. We must read the description St.-Simon gives of the manner in which Louis XIV imposed this marriage on his brother: the angry humiliation of MONSIEUR, 'more glorious than any prince of his house;' the outspoken rage of MADAME, who in public boxed the ears of her son; the sullen resignation of the bridegroom; the surprised terror of the little bride, who, kept in ignorance, and terrified at the king, knows not why she is summoned to his presence with more than usual solemnity; the matronly and discreet Madame de Maintenon, holding on her knees the child of her rival, and quieting her fears with caresses,—all this forms a picture of a colour and interest that brings vividly before our eyes those strange events. 'After the marriage of Monsieur le Duc de Chartres, nothing deserves our attention,' writes Madame de Sévigné to Bussy; and he in his turn says, he 'can find no such example in history.' After an alliance so unprecedented, the marriage of the Duc du Maine with Mademoiselle de Charolais, daughter of the Prince de Condé, appeared tame.

While rejoicing commanded by the king was taking place at Versailles; while the churches were crowded

with the flags captured from the enemy by Luxembourg and Catinat, misery, famine, and sickness were raging from one end of France to the other; and in Paris the poverty and mortality was frightful. Those who had once been affluent found themselves in straitened circumstances. Madame de Sévigné, who had reserved for herself but little out of all her large fortune, saw that little diminished by the difficulty of obtaining either money from her farmers or the possibility of selling the produce of her lands. It was a hard dispensation for her to finish in such painful embarrassments an existence which had begun so differently. In the numerous letters she writes to the Comtesse de Guitaut on the subject of her affairs—for her kind neighbour at Epoisses had taken on herself to do what was best for the marquise—we see traces of very serious cares. In the month of January, 1693, she begs the Comtesse de Guitaut to arrange so that her agent should send her 'as much as he can, and as soon as he can,' for she has a pressing need of money. War was incessant, and Madame de Sévigné, who in her youth wrote to Lenet that she would force him to own that 'war is a foolish amusement,' writes this year to Madame de Guitaut—'I assure you it seems as if all the interest of princes is to make war, for nothing is directed to peace.' . . . 'All the mothers are in despair,' she adds; 'what times!'

Other events made them also very sad times for our marquise. In the month of April she lost her cousin Bussy (How near the end it sounds! and must we then part with this goodly company ?), and the last days of May saw the end of the sufferings of Madame de la Fayette. Let us hear Madame de Sévigné herself speak her regrets. 'You know all the merit of Madame de la Fayette' (the letter is addressed to the Comtesse de Guitaut), from your own experience, from me, or from your friends. You could not believe too much good of her: she was worthy to be your friend; and I found myself too happy in having been loved by her for a very considerable time. Long habit had not accustomed me to her merit. It was an inclination always new and strong. The care and attention I rendered her was from the impulse of my heart, without the obligations which friendship commands having any share. I was assured also that I was her most precious consolation, and for forty years it was the same thing. This length of time says much, but it proves also the sincerity of our union. Her infirmities during the last two years had become extreme. I was always defending her, for people said she had lost her senses because she refused to go out. She had a mortal melancholy: what folly again! was she not the happiest woman in the world? She owned it with them, but I said to those people so precipitate in their

judgments—"Madame de la Fayette is not out of her senses," and I persisted in it. Alas! madame, the poor woman is now too truly vindicated for having acted as she did. It has been necessary for her to die to prove that she was right in being sad. . . . This is, my dear madame, what I have not been able to withstand telling you; you will forgive it for the sake of the feelings you know I have for you, and which have induced me to open my heart on a subject so near to it.

Madame de Sévigné in this letter expresses many of her religious feelings, her fears, and faith; but with years, and nearer to death, her devotion is always the same: there is no seeking after new forms of worship; no more rigid observance of self-imposed duties. It is the same serene faith, with no more severity, no more saddened aspect. The horror for all hypocrisy remains as strong; and at a period when the example of the king and his austere consort made devotion a fashion, Madame de Sévigné censures its false practice in the same strong terms she would have used twenty years before. In speaking to Madame de Guitaut of her new confessor (the one she had consulted for years being dead), Madame de Sévigné says—'I treat him after his fashion, which is mine also; for the more I see certain women speak only of their director, dine with him, receive his visits, have always a carriage ready for him, the more the secluded life of this father, and his soli-

tude, make him appear in my eyes worthy of the good opinion I always have had of him.'

Madame de Grignan remained for two years in Paris; and it was only in the beginning of 1694 that she returned to Provence, soon to be followed there by her mother. All who could leave the afflicted capital hurried away from it. In Burgundy Madame de Sévigné was dispensing her 'widow's mite' to those who were dying of hunger, and in the capital the same gloomy sights, and even 'more pitiable ones,' says she, were to be seen. Disease was increasing, and the mortality was appalling.

Madame de Grignan had returned to Provence to negotiate a great affair—no less than the marriage of her son, to whom she looked to rescue his house and throw on it new lustre. Still necessity and pride were warring in her heart. Her wish was to select from among her equals that rich bride she coveted. But Madame de Sévigné warned her not to cherish the illusion she had carried away with her; to think no more of Mademoiselle de Lavardin, whose husband was already selected by her father; not even of Mademoiselle d'Ormesson. She tells her to decide between her two remaining alternatives, one of which she calls 'the Stones,' and the other 'the Gold.' The Stones alluded probably (for no certain explanation is given) to some noble lady, heiress to some large castle like

Grignan, who, like the heir of Grignan, was also furnished with but little money. 'The Gold' was Mademoiselle de St.-Amant, daughter of a rich fermier-général, and who ultimately became the Marquise de Grignan.

On the 11th of May, accompanied by the Chevalier de Grignan, Madame de Sévigné left Paris—never to return to it, even in death, for she sleeps at Grignan. Monsieur and Madame de Coulanges saw her start with a regret affectionately tempered by the happiness they knew she would have in finding herself in the society of people she loved so well, and, adds Coulanges, 'enjoying all the pleasures inseparable from the magnificent château in which you are.' Madame de Coulanges, in failing health, more than ever inclined for retirement, with no children, and her gay husband, of whom she said she found herself 'too old even to be the mother,' could experience no greater loss than the presence of Madame de Sévigné. She felt the separation as it deserved, and to the marquise she continued to write letters which, serious, simple, even grave, show that she had become ever more worthy of an affection that had always been hers, even in the noisy dissipations of her earlier days.

It was to Coulanges and his wife that some of the difficulties which delayed the completion of the marriage of the young marquis were communicated. It

was of them she inquired what judgment the world would pronounce upon it. It was not favourable, but Coulanges, with his experience and good sense, writes without more ado—'Make, make your marriage: you are right, and the public is wrong. . . . . Take your measures, and console yourselves for a *mésalliance* with the sweet thought of having no more creditors, of living in large and magnificent châteaux which owe nothing to any one; and with the satisfaction of being able to give from the superfluity, which appears to me the greatest happiness in life.'

It was indeed a pleasure to be allowed to enjoy in peace and affluence a noble mansion like Grignan, with which Madame de Sévigné seemed ever more delighted. The improvements began by the prelates in the family had at last been completed, and a handsome perron, large galleries, a new and superb hall, added to the beauty of the 'royal palace,' as Coulanges called it. It was there that was celebrated, on the 2nd of January, 1695, the ceremony of the nuptials of the Marquis de Grignan and Mademoiselle de St.-Amant. The affianced bride is described by Madame de Sévigné 'as pretty, amiable, well brought up, and most reasonable.' She was eighteen, and received from her father a dower of four hundred thousand francs, and 'linen, dresses, laces, and jewels to the value of more than fifty

thousand francs. Monsieur de St.-Amant further proved himself most generous; paying with a lavish hand all the debts of the family. By this union those harrowing torments which had pursued the Grignans for so many years were dispelled. Security and tranquillity were felt, but only to give place to new anxieties, for very soon after this joyful event the health of Madame de Grignan, delicate for years, was to assume a most alarming character.

CHAPTER XX.

1695-6.

Projected marriage of Pauline de Grignan.—The Duc de Chaulnes is deprived of the government of Brittany.—Sympathy of Madame de Sévigné.—Failing health of Madame de Grignan.—Celebration of the marriage of Pauline.—Last letter of Madame de Sévigné.

THE last letters written by Madame de Sévigné at Grignan, and deprived of that worldly element which has often been said to form one of their great attractions, were received in Paris by Monsieur and Madame de Coulanges, who had become the principal correspondents of the marquise, with a gratification and delight which show them thoroughly appreciative of that matchless style which Madame de Coulanges said 'changed all into gold.'

It is worthy of remark that the letters of Madame de Grignan and those of Monsieur de Sévigné will alone bear a favourable comparison with those of their gifted mother. Their style, without having the same force, elevation, eloquence, and all those qualities never since in the same degree united in one person,

is yet noble, clear, and refined. It is the echo of a pure voice, but a distinct echo that strikes gratefully on the ears.

The marriage of the young marquis was to be closely followed by that of his sister, and in the early part of 1695 the charming Pauline, for whom Madame de Coulanges seems to have had an affectionate admiration, was having her hand sought by the Marquis de Simiane. This alliance, uniting a great name and a large fortune, was all that Madame de Grignan could desire. The beauty and wit of Pauline were in truth serving for her dower; and a reciprocated inclination was levelling all the obstacles that had stood in the way of the union. Even before it was definitively settled the news had reached Paris, causing delight to all the attached friends of the marquise: to Madame de Coulanges, and to the Duchesse de Chaulnes, who continued to feel for Madame de Sévigné the most sincere affection.

The Gouverneur and Gouvernante of Brittany were in Paris at the time, enjoying the splendour of their hôtel in the Place Royale, receiving MONSIEUR at superb repasts, and amusing themselves with the society of Coulanges, the welcome guest of every noble house, where however he always retained an independent and respected position. It was he who diverted the inhabitants of Grignan with descriptions

of the life he led, his visits to Versailles, to Meudon—Madame de Louvois' princely residence—and from one splendid house to the other.

Madame de Sévigné, for whom the idea of Brittany was intimately associated with the Chaulnes, was to live long enough to see them dispossessed of their government. The king was coveting it for the Comte de Toulouse, his son. A little patience on the part of the monarch would have given it to him naturally, for Monsieur de Chaulnes was far advanced in years, but the blow, softened as it was by the gift of the government of Guienne and a thousand kind speeches, was too heavy for the old governor. He was accustomed to his little kingdom : he was loved ; he was respected ; and to see all these ties severed, broke the hearts both of the duc and his duchesse. They showed a good face to the world, but their regrets were no less deep. Madame de Coulanges seeing their grief could hardly understand it : the rest and peace they might secure for themselves seemed to her the most enviable consolation ; to live at Chaulnes, or at the Place Royale, preferable to all the glories of Rennes.

Madame de Sévigné, who had not loved the world as Madame de Coulanges had done, was more just in appreciating the feelings of Monsieur and Madame de Chaulnes, and not having fallen into one extreme, she was not likely to fall into the other ; but measured all

at its just value. 'I have followed,' says she, 'all the feelings of these good governors, and I have not found any that were not in their place, and which did not come from the most perfect reason and generosity. They have felt the great sorrow of leaving a province they have governed and loaded with good for twenty-six years; they moreover have obeyed most nobly. They have wanted courage to conquer the force of habit, which had united them to Brittany. . . . I see nothing but what is admirable in all this behaviour, and I have felt it and followed it with all the interest of one who loves them and honours them from her heart.'

The sentiments of Madame de Sévigné were in this occasion shared by nearly all the Bretons in Paris. They came in crowds to the Hôtel de Chaulnes to testify their sorrow and regret.

On hearing the news of this change in Brittany, Madame de Sévigné had expressed her regret on the score of her son; for though she writes to Coulanges that nothing reminds her of her age, and that on the contrary she seems to be going backwards, she felt certain that the Rochers would see her no more. Sévigné had wearied of the 'useless life' he led there, and in 1693 had solicited and obtained the post of 'Lieutenant of the king for Nantes and the Comté Nantais.' He found in this position enough to occupy him, but the

fatigues of it were too much for his delicate wife, and it was with delight the young marquise found herself back at her Rochers. It was there a letter from Madame de Sévigné, full of tender solicitude for one so dear to him and of affection for himself, reached her son. 'You are then back at our poor Rochers, my dear children,' writes she with a sort of yearning as it were for the quiet old house and its secluded alleys. 'I enter, my dear child,' she afterwards goes on to say, addressing her son, 'with an infinite tenderness into all your feelings, and from the depths of my heart. You do me justice when you tell me that you fear to move me too much in describing the state of your heart; do not think that I am not keenly sensible of it.' Then, as if seized with a presentiment, she says—'I shall make you read them' (some letters she had been alluding to) 'in Paris, where I always hope to see you; for I feel a thousand times more the affection I have for you than you feel that you have for me. It is the order of things, and I do not complain.' And then for the last time we find coming from the pen of Madame de Sévigné the name of her 'friend Pilois,' the gardener at the Rochers. In a few lines added to the letter to her son, and addressed to the President de Mauron, she says—'My son makes me the compliments of Pilois, and of the workmen who have finished the labyrinth. I accept them, and

love them, and thank them.' This was her gentle leave-taking with those humble people.

The health of Madame de Grignan delayed the intended return to Paris, and the anxiety suffered by the marquise while watching the sick-bed of that beloved daughter was such that she writes to Coulanges—'I confess to you, my dear cousin, that I am dying of this, and that I am not capable of supporting all the bad nights she causes me to pass. . . . It seems to me that mothers ought not to be allowed to live long enough to see their daughters in such a state. I complain of it respectfully to Providence.'

It was under such gloomy auspices that the marriage of Pauline de Grignan was celebrated on the 29th of November, 1695. Her mother was too weak to be even carried to the chapel, and every appearance of rejoicing was banished. Nevertheless for Madame de Sévigné it must have been a happy day, that which allowed her to see her dear Pauline established in life as her tender affection desired. She wrote of it to the President de Moulceau—'that no one could be so well matched,' and that the marriage was 'noble and convenient; advantageous for the daughter of the house of Grignan, who had found a man and a family who consider only her merit, her person, and her name, and not her fortune, which usually is counted everything.'

The estates of the Grignans and the Simianes adjoined, so that in fact Pauline was not taken from her mother; and the advice Madame de Sévigné had given many years before to Madame de Grignan, to rather marry her daughter in *Béarn* than separate from her, had by a singular fortune been carried out. On the 29th of March, 1696, in perfect health, Madame de Sévigné wrote the last letter we have of her. It is addressed to Coulanges, and is full of regret at the death of Blanchefort, a son of the Maréchal de Créqui. The sentiments are so touchingly expressed, and a few years after might so appropriately have been applied to her own grandson, that we give a portion of the letter:—'A reputation made, a valour recognized, and worthy of his name; a temper admirable for himself (for a bad temper torments), good for his friends, good for his family. . . . A good sense, with a pleasing face, not intoxicated with his youth, as are all young men, . . . and that amiable young man disappears in a moment like a flower carried by the wind. . . . My dear cousin, where find words to say what we think of the grief of those two mothers [the mother and grandmother]?'

CHAPTER XXI.

1696.

Madame de Sévigné takes the small-pox.—Solitude of her death-bed.—Regret of Madame de Grignan.—Sévigné's deference to his mother's last wishes.—Letter to his sister.—Grief of the friends of the marquise.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ said she was dying of the illness of her daughter. In truth there is strong presumption that fatigue, sleepless nights, and anxious days disposed her to the illness which ended fatally for her. At the beginning of April the terrible scourge that was to carry away her daughter nine years later, and before that her young grandson—small-pox, so fatal in those times, seized Madame de Sévigné. From the first moment she measured her danger, and one that had been so gentle and fearful for others, showed a brave and serene countenance to the death she had so dreaded.

Alas! by that sick-bed there were but strangers. It was Mademoiselle de Martillac who gave proofs to Madame de Sévigné of a devoted attachment

and heartfelt gratitude. Madame de Grignan was very ill herself; but while she had strength to breathe she ought to have found enough to be taken to the side of a mother, who spoke but the strict truth when she said she adored her. The woman who had lived entirely for her children was childless in that last supreme moment. In the bitter anguish of that hour when the valley of death is crossed, the eyes that she had so much loved did not meet hers to support and console her. It saddens our heart to think of the longing Madame de Sévigné must have felt for that daughter for whose presence she always yearned so tenderly. Had her son been there, had he been in the place of Madame de Grignan, it seems to us no obstacle would have kept him from his mother. However, that 'Divine Providence' to which Madame de Sévigné had bowed all her life, had decided that she should be solitary in that last hour; and face to face with her God, she went to meet His presence.

It was on the 17th of April, 1696, that a life so pure, so good, was closed. The fatal event was concealed for some time from Madame de Grignan, but when it was disclosed to her, her heart appears to have felt all the grief and regret such a loss might be expected to call forth. She expresses what she felt in a letter addressed to the President de Moulceau:—

'Your consideration must not make you fear, mon-

sieur, to renew my grief in speaking to me of the dreadful loss I have sustained. It is a thought that my mind never loses sight of, and which is so deeply engraved in my heart, that nothing can take it from me. I am well persuaded, monsieur, that you cannot have heard the terrible misfortune that has fallen on me without shedding tears. . . . You lose a friend of incomparable merit and fidelity; nothing is more worthy of your regret: and I, monsieur, what do I not lose? What perfections did she not unite, to be to me, in different ways, more dear and precious! A loss so complete and so irreparable does not dispose one to seek consolation except in tears and lamentations. I have not the strength to lift my eyes high enough to find the place whence help must come; I can as yet but turn my eyes around me, where I no longer see that person who has loaded me with affection, and who had no other care but to give me every day new marks of her tender attachment with the happiness of her presence. It is true, monsieur, that strength more than human is required to bear so cruel a separation and such a privation. I was far from being prepared for it. The perfect health I saw her enjoying, a year of suffering which a hundred times has put my life in peril, had taken away from my mind all idea that the order of Nature might be followed in my case. I flattered myself; I flattered

myself I should never suffer such a great sorrow. I feel it, and suffer it in all its intensity.'

Those words of Madame de Grignan represent better than any we could use what Madame de Sévigné had been to her daughter. When that mother was no more, she measured to its full extent her priceless value. A loss irreparable! such it was indeed.

Even in death the partial tenderness of Madame de Sévigné seemed to be watching over her beloved child. Before leaving Paris she had intrusted to the hands of the 'Lieutenant Civil, Le Camus,' a paper which gave Madame de Grignan an advantage over her brother. It was in his power to have offered some opposition, but by Sévigné the wish of his mother was accepted as law, and by his ready acquiescence in her intentions he gave the most solid testimony of how much he resembled her he was mourning.

The letter he wrote to his sister is such, that if that fond mother could have read those lines, they must have wrung her heart by the conviction that she had not always done justice to a son so worthy of her affection. 'My mother,' writes Sévigné, 'has always kept secret from me what has passed between you and her since the arrangements she had the kindness to make at the time of my marriage. I have never been well understood by her on this subject. She has sometimes suspected me of interestedness, and jealousy

of all the marks of affection she has bestowed on you. I have now the pleasure of giving substantial proofs of the real sentiments of my heart. Monsieur le Lieutenant Civil was witness of the first impulses, which are always the most natural. I am more than contented with what my mother did for me when I was in the Gendarmerie and at court. I have still before my eyes all she accomplished in my favour at the time of my marriage, to which I owe all the happiness of my life. I measure the "long and solid obligations we owe her,"—these are the words of your letter. All the rest has never caused me the slightest emotion. Were it true that there was in her heart something more tender for you than for me, do you believe in good faith, my dearest sister, that I could find any fault in your being found more amiable than me? And my fortune; either want of luck or want of merit, has it turned in a way to dispose any one to partiality in my favour? Enjoy in peace what you hold from the affection and kindness of my mother. If I could put any impediment to it—the very thought of which causes me horror—and I should find means as easy as they would in reality be difficult, I should consider myself as a monster if I had the least intention of doing so. More than half my course is already run: I have no children; you have given me some whom I love tenderly. . . . If

I could wish to be richer, it would be for your sake and that of your children. We shall never quarrel except through excess of affection. I intend that the Grignans shall find me worthy of you and them. I sacrifice nothing for them, but I would sacrifice a great deal to retain their friendship and esteem.'

It was thus her son accepted the last token of a partiality which is the only blemish in Madame de Sévigné's life. Mourned and regretted she was by her children; but mourned also with tears of real grief by those friends she so truly loved. 'Since the day that was announced to us the cruel malady,' writes Coulanges to Madame de Simiane, 'we have lost all tranquillity. Madame la Duchesse de Chaulnes is dying of it; the poor Madame de la Troche also. . . . We meet together to weep and regret what we have lost.'

No one had felt this bereavement with greater force than Madame de Coulanges. 'She is in such desolation,' writes her husband, 'that it cannot be expressed, and which makes me fear seriously for her health.' Madame de Coulanges could not accustom herself to the loss she had sustained; and the improvement in Madame de Grignan's health, and the announcement of her speedy return to Paris, but made her 'feel deeply moved that this joy should not be shared by one so worthy of it.' She could not reconcile herself

'to the thought that no return could give her a hope of seeing again what she regretted with so much reason.'

Nothing but the memory now lives of Madame de Sévigné; but that is imperishable, and is intrusted to the care of immortality.

Having now reached the end, we have only to ask the reader who has accompanied us thus far to speak with us those true and noble lines Bussy inscribed beneath a portrait of his cousin, and which would form a fitting epitaph over the remains of that noble woman:—

MARIE DE RABUTIN,
MARQUISE DE SÉVIGNÉ,
DAUGHTER OF THE BARON DE CHANTAL,
A WOMAN OF EXTRAORDINARY GENIUS
AND SOLID VIRTUE,
CO-EXISTENT WITH MANY CHARMS.

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GENEALOGICAL TABLE SHEWING THE ANCESTORS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, WITH HER RELATIONS AND DESCENDANTS.

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